The ENCHANTED PEACOCK

Story by JULIA BROWN
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THE ENCHANTED PEACOCK AND OTHER STORIES

As he gazed toward the Enchanted Forest he saw the White Peacock fly from it.

The Enchanted Peacock and Other Stories

by

Julia Brown

with pictures
by
Lucy Fitch Perkins

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To My Beloved Father
HENRY L. BROWN

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THE ENCHANTED PEACOCK

The Princess Aza weaving the golden cords.

THE ENCHANTED PEACOCK

ONCE upon a time—when there were fairies and enchanters and griffins and dragons; when there were lovely princesses in distress and princes fine and brave enough to rescue them; in that wonderful time called the Long Ago—there lived a powerful King. His kingdom was so great, he scarcely knew how far it reached; but he ruled his people well, and peace and plenty filled the land. But in time the King grew old, very, very old, so he called his wisest men and said to them:

"Have made for me a map of all my kingdom, divided into three equal portions."

The wise men greatly wondered at this division, but no man dared question the mighty King.

When the map was made, and it took many days of toil and travel over the vast dominions, it was laid before the King.

"Is it perfect?" he asked.

"As nearly perfect, O King, as the wisdom and knowledge of man can make it," answered the one who had drawn it.

"Are the three divisions equal," then queried the King, "so that no part can be said to be better than another?"

"As nearly equal, O King, as the judgment and discretion of man can apportion them," answered the maker.

"It is well," said the King, and then he dismissed the wise men with rich rewards and words of praise, but no explanations, and they went away wondering more than ever.

When he was left alone the King wrote upon one portion of the map the name of his eldest son, upon another the name of his second son, and upon the other the name of his third son. Below the map he wrote:

"In this manner do I, the King, decree that my kingdom be divided," and then signed his name in big, bold letters.

That night the King died, for he was very, very old. All his sons mourned for him, and the people sorrowed with them, for they had loved him.

When the map of the King's dominions was brought forth to the princes, they too wondered greatly at it and were grieved, for the King had four sons. And they did not know that it was because the King was so very, very old that he had forgotten the youngest son of all, so that for him there was no inheritance. At first the three older brothers—they were very much older—said:

"We will have a new map made and the kingdom divided into four equal parts. Each of us will have all he needs, then." But the wise men said:

"It may not be. In this country the will of a king cannot be broken. It is an unchangeable law."

Then the eldest brother said to the youngest:

"My little brother Orrell, my kingdom is your kingdom, and all I have is yours."

And the second brother said:

"My little brother Orrell, my palace is your palace, and all I have is yours."

And the third brother said:

"My little brother Orrell, my people are your people, and all I have is yours."

Then they all kissed him, and he was quite contented and happy.

And indeed, they were most kind to him, and each was sorry in his heart that his father had forgotten this littlest one of all, and had left him no inheritance. But Prince Orrell himself cared not. He was as one who has three fathers, such love and kindness did he receive from the three older brothers. And he lived most happily, going from one kingdom to another, dividing his time among them.

He had grown to be a fine, tall lad when he said to his eldest brother, early one summer day:

"Brother, I wish to go away."

"And to which of our brothers do you wish to go?" asked the eldest brother.

"To neither one," answered Prince Orrell.

"Then where do you wish to go, my little brother? Are you not happy here?"

"I do not know where I wish to go, and I am happy here, only—" Then he looked up into the kind, smiling face of the King, his elder brother, and said:

"It is the summer calls me, I think. The trees wave their boughs and beckon me, the winds whisper as they blow across my face, and even the brooks murmur,

'Follow us.' My feet are restless and my heart is sick with longing. Let me go, my brother."

Then the King looked very grave, but by and by he said:

"Playing with the children"

"Who would harm you, heart's treasure? I will give you a trusty squire—"

"No, no," cried the boy, "I must go alone!"

"Then I will give you a keen, sharp sword."

"No, for I am not a warrior or knight, and I go in peace."

"Then you shall have a fat purse of gold," said the King, and although the Prince tried to refuse, he had presently to say that he would at least take a small one.

So on the morrow he set forth, waving farewell to the good brother, who was sad at heart to see him go. And all the happy summer he wandered, from the sea to the mountains, working and singing with the fisher folk, playing with the children, or sitting with the villagers at even, listening to tales of the wise and great and good of old.

And, since the autumn brought him home brown and strong and happy, the brothers were satisfied that no harm had come to him. So summer after summer Prince Orrell fared forth, till far and wide people came to know him as "the Wandering Prince." And many times did knowledge he had gained in his farings prove of use to his brothers in their councils, for Prince Orrell came very near to the heart of the people as he lived their simple life under the sky.

When the Prince was twenty-one and about to set forth on his seventh summer of wandering, he turned his face to the north, determined to go farther than ever before. So he journeyed to the very limits of his second

brother's dominions, and crossed the boundaries into a new and strange country. Pleased and interested in all he saw, the Prince was minded to go on to the capital of the kingdom. The people were taller and fairer than in his country, and their fairness pleased the dark prince well.

"Tell me something of your King," said he one day to a fellow traveler he had overtaken on the road. The man frowned.

"He is well enough," he said. "He cares most for his money bags, which he sits counting all day long, but he does not rule us badly. If only the Princess Aza could be found,"—he began, but broke off with a sigh.

"Is the Princess lost?" asked Prince Orrell.

"She must be," answered the man. "We cannot believe her dead." Seeing the interest of the Prince, he continued:

"When our late King died there was great sorrow in the land, for we loved him well. But we looked to the Princess Aza for comfort, believing she would rule as kindly and justly as her father. But when the day of her crowning dawned, she was gone, none knew where. Search was made without ceasing for a year and a day, but no trace of her was ever found." The man again sighed, deeply.

"And your King?" suggested the Prince, after waiting for him to resume.

"He was the half-brother of our late King, and seeing no one else could lay claim to the crown, it was given to him."

"Does the search for the Princess Aza continue?" asked the Prince.

"Yes, every year, upon the anniversary of the day of her disappearance, an expedition is sent out. But it always returns without news of her whereabouts. There is but one place they do not go."

"Where is that?" inquired the Prince.

The man lowered his voice, and glanced uneasily about him.

"It is the Enchanted Forest," he said. "Many have gone in, but none ever comes out, and the people now believe our Princess may be there. Yet who is he bold enough to search there for her?"

"I should like to see what the forest contains," smiled the Prince.

"Beware of trying to enter!" cried the man, earnestly. "Remember, no one has ever yet returned from it." As here their roads separated, the countryman left him, again warning him against the Enchanted Forest.

The Prince pursued his way, and in time arrived at

the outskirts of the capital. Not far away rose huge towers and battlements which he supposed to belong to the palace of the King. As he stood gazing at them he heard, near at hand, a loud clattering of hoofs. He turned, and down the road came a great gilded coach, rocking from side to side with the mad gallop of two fine black horses, over which the coachman had lost all control. In the carriage, alone, sat an old man, wringing his hands in fear. The Prince sprang forward and caught at the horses' heads. Well he needed his strength then, but after a moment or two the wild pace was checked, and the horses stopped. The old man fell back upon his cushions and closed his eyes. His frightened attendants came galloping up, crying:

"Is your Majesty hurt?"

The King, for it was he, unclosed his eyes and looked at the Prince.

"Get in," he commanded, and the Prince stepped into the coach.

They drove on toward the palace, and the King heaped thanks upon the Prince.

"But I hope," he said, "you do not mean to ask for anything. A good deed should be its own reward. I will keep you as my guest, though, so long as you like to stay," he added, graciously. Prince Orrell thanked him and

said he wished for no reward, but he did not tell him who he was.

The horses were gentle now, and they reached the palace without further adventure. Over the drawbridge which spanned the moat, and under the great arched gateway they drove, into a courtyard across whose oval a flock of white peacocks strutted, spreading their tails in the sunshine. On either side of the gateway was a huge, round tower, and in the lesser of these the Prince was quartered.

In his wanderings the Prince had learned to be contented with his lodgings, whatever they were, and his little room high up in the tower was furnished almost with luxury. He slept well and awakened, as was his habit, at dawn. Looking from his window he saw a curious sight. The flock of white peacocks he had observed the night before were drawn up in line at the foot of the huge tower opposite his own. Each bird gazed up at a window near the top of the tower, expectantly. As the Prince followed their gaze, he saw another white peacock, larger and far more beautiful than any of these, appear at the window. The peacocks below bent their heads and solemnly flapped their wings. The beautiful bird above bowed its head as if in response, then spread

its wings and flew from the window, the Prince watching it out of sight.

"What a curious thing," he said. "I wonder if the others will follow?"

But they did not—only turned, and went picking their way about through the dew-laden grass.

"I must ask the King about it," he thought, but the King was very busy that day with matters of state, so the Prince scarcely saw him. Later in the day he went for a long walk in the country, and was coming back to the castle just at sunset when he heard the whirr of wings. Glancing quickly up, he saw the White Peacock fly into its tower.

When it disappeared, the Prince hurried through the gate and ran to the door of the tower. Alas, it was locked and barred so he could not enter. Once more he thought to ask the King, but again the King was too busy to see him. So he spent a restless and wakeful night, for the White Peacock had taken a strong hold upon his fancy.

On the morrow, before the first glimpse of day, the Prince dressed and went quietly down his stair to the courtyard below. Standing in the shadow of the gateway, he watched the peacocks gather at the foot of the tower. The Prince waited, breathlessly, and just as the

sun rose he saw the great White Peacock in the window far above. The birds below bent their heads and raised their wings, but the Prince had no eyes for them. He was gazing at the beautiful bird above, and when it spread its wings and flew away he stepped through the gateway and watched it until, almost out of sight, it seemed to enter a distant forest.

"Now I will find out," said the Prince, "where the bird goes," and he hurried to seek the King.

Yes, the King was in a gracious mood and would see him. After the usual compliments and inquiries as to the health of the King (who never would admit that he was well), the Prince said:

"Your Majesty, I have become very much interested in your peacocks."

"Nasty things," said the King, frowning, "they screech and wake me up in the morning."

"But why does one of them live in the great tower, and why do the others salute it as it flies away?" persisted the Prince. The King sat up very straight and looked hard at the Prince.

"Young man," he remarked, "you have been dreaming. I never heard such nonsense."

The Prince got a little red in the face. He was about to say something sharp when he reflected that he was the

King's guest, and that no one knew he was a prince. So he merely asked:

"May I go into the tower and see if I can find the White Peacock?"

"Mercy, no!" almost shouted the King. "There, I have things to attend to. Go away. Amuse yourself some other way than by poking into horrid old places like that. Go away."

So the Prince went away. And as he saw he would have to find out what he wanted to know without any help from the King, he thought he would better be about it. He took his stout walking stick and set out in the direction the White Peacock had taken. He passed through the town and out upon a straight road leading that way. As he traveled along, the houses began to be farther and farther apart, the people he met fewer and fewer, but he came nearer to that forest he thought he had seen the peacock enter. After meeting no one for a long time, he finally saw a man hurrying toward him, looking behind him, now and then, rather fearfully. The man seemed greatly pleased at the sight of him, and the Prince said:

"This seems a lonely road, my friend."

"It is, I grant you," answered the man. "I would I might never have to travel it again."

The Prince smiled.

"It does not look dangerous," he said.

The man gazed at him steadily, before answering:

"You are a stranger, indeed, not to have heard of the Enchanted Forest."

"Is that the Enchanted Forest, that wood I see?" cried the Prince, eagerly. "Why, that is just what I have been wishing to find."

The man shuddered.

"You will find it to your sorrow," he said, "should you once enter it. Some have been rash enough to do so, but they have never been seen again."

"Why, what can there be in it so deadly?" asked the Prince.

"How can we tell, who have never gone in, and how can they tell us, who have never come out?" answered the man. "Yet some have been bold enough—not I, not I,—to stand and peer into the gloomy road which enters it. Fearful shapes steal across it like shadows; fiery eyeballs glare out of the darkness; growls and shrieks are heard, and even the trees sway and moan, although there be no wind." The man paused, and wiped the sweat of fear from his brow.

The Prince looked thoughtful. He must find out, yes, that was certain, but he must do nothing rash for the

sake of those three dear brothers who trusted him, and who looked for his safe return home. As he gazed toward the Enchanted Forest he saw a bird fly from it. A second glance, and he exclaimed:

"The White Peacock!"

"Yes," said the man, "it is the only thing which goes in and comes out again."

The Prince gave him a hurried good-by, turned and followed the direction the bird had taken. Did it fly more slowly? The Prince kept pace with it and reached the palace gate just at sunset, as the White Peacock was entering the tower window.

For a moment it rested on the sill, then one white feather floated down to the Prince. He picked it up, stuck it in his cap, and entered the gate. Once more he examined the door of the tower, but again found it tightly locked. He had stood a long time wondering how he should get into the tower, when he heard some one coming. Although it was now dark, the man came very quietly, looking about him as though he feared to be seen. He bore a large covered basket, and passed by the Prince without seeming to see him. He set the basket down, took from his belt several large keys, and began to unlock the door. The Prince watched him with rising hope. The man opened the door, then turned to get his basket, and

the Prince stepped in. The man followed him, still not seeming to see him, and carefully locked the door again.

Up a narrow stair, around and around like a corkscrew, the man toiled with his basket, the wondering Prince behind, until they paused at the door of a room high in the tower. Again the man set down his basket, unlocked the door, and the Prince slipped in. Following him, still taking no notice of him, came the man with his basket. This he set upon the floor. Then he went to a tiny cupboard, took out a fine white cloth, and covered a little table in the center of the room. From the same cupboard he took a cup and saucer, a glass, plates, spoons, forks, everything needed to furnish the table for one person. Lastly, he took from the basket covered silver dishes of meats and bread and honey, silver baskets of fruit, and a crystal flagon of wine. With these he placed upon the table three silver candlesticks with yellow wax candles, and lighted them. Then he rang a little silver bell, took his basket, and withdrew, locking the door behind him.

The Prince took a long breath. Was there ever such good luck? Now he would search for the White Peacock. But before he could take a step, a velvet curtain at the other end of the tiny room was drawn aside, and such a vision of beauty stood there as the Prince in all his wanderings had never seen. It was a young girl, tall and

slender, with pale gold hair and wondrous dark blue eyes. She was clothed in a robe of white satin, embroidered in golden peacock feathers with yellow topaz eyes, and on her hands and about her throat these same splendid jewels glowed. She stood a moment looking about the tiny room, then moved toward the table, without seeming to see the Prince. He, in his great surprise, had forgotten to take off his cap. Now he seized it, and bowing low, said:

"Most beautiful one, will you pardon the curiosity which has brought me here? I thought to find a bird; I see a queen."

As the Prince withdrew his cap, the lady gave a little startled cry, but when he ceased speaking, she was smiling.

"Who are you?" she asked.

"I am Orrell, whom people call 'the Wandering Prince,' " he answered.

"I have heard of you," she said. "How came you here?"

"I am a guest of the King. I have come into this tower in search of a beautiful White Peacock which flies into the upper window at sunset."

"But how did you get into the tower?" she asked again. "Is it not always locked?"

"I only know I followed the man who brought you these," and he waved his hand toward the table with its silver dishes.

The lady looked at him closely, and saw the peacock feather in the cap which he held in his hand. Then she said:

"Kindly replace your cap for a moment."

The puzzled Prince obeyed. Then she said:

"That will do," and as he removed the cap, she continued:

"It is the feather which makes you invisible. With your cap on, Prince Orrell, you can be seen by no one. That is why you could come into the tower, and that is how you can serve me—if you care to," she added wistfully, "for I am the Princess Aza, and also the White Peacock."

The Prince dropped upon one knee at her feet.

"Most gracious Princess," he said, "I offer you my life. I will serve you faithfully until its end, in whatever way you command."

The Princess gave him her hand and he kissed it in token of service. Then she said, with a charming smile:

"Come and sup with me, Prince Orrell, if so be anything can be found among these simple viands to tempt your appetite." Then with her own fair hands she took

from the tiny cupboard his plate and cup, and they sat down to the meal. Then the Prince asked:

"Why did you say you were the White Peacock? Surely I have seen a real bird enter and depart from this tower."

"Now am I the Princess Aza," she answered, sadly, "but at dawn I shall be a white peacock, like the flock you see below, and shall fly away toward the Enchanted Forest and to the palace of my fairy godmother. There I am again the Princess until time for me to fly back here."

"But why is this?" questioned the Prince.

"It is through the wicked magic of a great enchanter," answered the Princess, "one who hated my good father and wished to keep his child from the throne."

"But does not the King know of this? He would not have me enter the tower."

"I think my uncle, the King, knows who the White Peacock is," she answered, slowly, "and so has the tower kept locked and the meals always served. But the fault was not his in the first place. He is weak, but not cruel."

"Is there a way to release you from this spell?" cried the Prince.

"There is. My fairy godmother could not entirely break it, but had it not been for her, I would never have borne the form of a princess at all, but would always have

been a bird. Even now," she continued, "should one be found brave enough and willing enough, the spell could be broken completely."

The Prince could scarcely wait for her to finish.

"Oh, whatever be the way, whatever the danger, I beg you will let me try. I will give my life if only you might always be as you are now."

"Would you enter the Enchanted Forest for me? That place from which no one has ever returned?"

"I was going there to seek for the White Peacock, only yesterday," said the Prince, simply. "If I would venture there for a bird, would I not go to rescue the lady—"he paused, then rose and came to the Princess's side—"the lady of my love." he said firmly. "Be not angry, beautiful Princess Aza, but my heart is yours beyond recall. Will you give me a little hope?"

The Princess lowered her eyes, and a deep rose stole into her cheeks. Then she looked at him and said:

"He who rescues me can claim my hand as his reward, but only Prince Orrell can claim my heart. Now you must go, for I hear the man returning to clear the table. Put on your cap, and you can follow him out unseen. To-morrow night, at sunset, come again. Good-night."

She held out her hand, which the Prince kissed, then disappeared behind the velvet curtain. He replaced his cap upon his head and presently followed the servant with his basket, and with him left the tower.

Well, the Prince did not sleep much that night, either, for he was thinking of the lovely Princess Aza, and planning her rescue. He did not rise to see the White Peacock fly from the tower, nor watch for its return at sunset. Now that he had seen the Princess as she really was, he could not bear to look upon her in the form of a bird. So he spent the long day as best he might, keeping out of the King's way. And, had he known it, that monarch was quite as anxious to avoid him and what he called his "meddlesome questions."

During the day he walked to the town and there bought for himself a rich suit of ruby velvet, to do honor to the Princess, and he blessed the good brother who had made him take with him a purse of gold. Then he went into the palace gardens and plucked a large bouquet of fragrant blossoms, white and yellow. To the impatient Prince the hours dragged by, but as the sun set he came down the stair, dressed in his ruby velvet, which well set off his rich, dark beauty. With the flowers in his hand, he stood again, cap on head, in the shadow of the huge gateway. When it was quite dark he heard approaching

the man who served the Princess, and again followed him into the tower and up to the tiny room. How slow he seemed in setting the table! The Prince would have liked to hurry him, but had to content himself with waiting and watching the velvet curtain. When the man had finally gone, locking the door behind him, the curtain was drawn, and the eager Prince, cap in hand, was bowing low before the beautiful Princess Aza.

"Welcome, Prince Orrell," she said, holding out her hand. "You are faithful to our appointment."

The Prince kissed the little jeweled hand and answered:

"The day has seemed a year, sweet Princess, I so longed to see you again and know how I might rescue you."

As she gazed at the tall, handsome youth, the Princess took note of the splendor of his attire, and smiled with pleasure.

"Let us sup now," she said, "and I will tell you of the only way in which the cruel, magic spell may be broken." A shade of sadness crept over her face as she spoke, and to dispel it, Prince Orrell hastened to present his flowers.

"They are from the gardens which should be yours,"

he said. "The King gave me free access to them when I first arrived."

"When you saved his life?" asked the Princess, as she took the flowers.

"How knew you of that?" exclaimed the Prince. "And I remember you knew of me as 'the Wandering Prince,' also."

"From my fairy godmother I hear many things," she answered. "Let me thank you now for the flowers. They shall grace our meal," and she placed them in a silver vase on the table.

"Tell me how I may better deserve your thanks," he said. "When may I go to the Enchanted Forest, and what am I to do there? How can I fear it if you are there?"

"I shall not be there," she replied quietly. "You go not to, but through, the forest to find me. It is the only way, but beyond its dark shadows lies the fair and lovely domain of my godmother, the Fairy Felis. You need fear no danger. The magic feather in your cap will render you invisible to all the dark creatures of the wood. Take the road which runs straight through the forest, turn neither to the right nor the left, no matter what lies in your path. When you come to a high wall with a little wicket gate, push open the gate and you

will find yourself in the palace gardens of the Fairy Felis. She will be awaiting you. So long as you do not fear, no harm can come to you."

"I have no fear," he said. "When may I go? To-morrow?"

"To-morrow," she answered, gravely. "Now 't is time to leave me. I hear the man returning."

Again the Prince kissed her hand, and as she vanished behind the velvet curtain he put his cap upon his head, and the man entered. Presently he departed with his basket, and the Prince went with him.

But this night the Prince slept,—a long, dreamless, untroubled sleep. He who had never known fear in all his life, felt none for the morrow's adventure. He was to serve his Princess, so deep peace filled his heart and he rested happy and content.

In the morning he was up and away, through the town and out upon the lonely road which led to the Enchanted Forest. During the day the King inquired for him.

"He has gone, your Majesty," he was answered, "on one of those long walks he takes almost daily."

"I wish he would never come back," muttered the King. And well might he wish that.

Prince Orrell was drawing near the forest and his

heart beat high as he saw its dark green spread out before him. A wall of huge fir trees, growing closely together, made entrance impossible save where the gloomy road opened. As he reached it, he settled his cap firmly upon his head and stepped into the shadows. There was no wind outside, but in here the trees were swaying and rustling, beating the ground with their low branches, or tossing them upward as if in pain. The Prince walked quickly on, head erect, eyes glancing in all directions. There were stealthy steps in the underbrush; low growls came to his ears, and large bats flapped about his head.

Presently he came to a road which ran off to the right. It looked brighter and pleasanter as the Prince glanced down it. Still he kept straight on. Then suddenly, in the road before him, appeared two huge lions facing each other, seeming to bar his path. How could he pass them? Would it not be better to take the side road? Then the words of the Princess Aza rang loudly in his ears:

"Turn neither to the right nor the left."

The Prince looked at the lions. They were very still and, yes, surely there was room to pass between without touching either of them. He pulled his cap tightly down upon his head and lightly, quickly, stepped

between the great beasts. A little way down the road he paused and looked back, but the lions were gone.

As he went farther into the wood the way grew darker. There were cries and moans, and the whir of wings, as though some huge night bird broke its way through the trees. Fiery eyeballs glowed in the dusk and sometimes came quite close to the Prince. Presently he saw across his path a barrier as high as his knee. What could it be? He drew nearer, and lo, there lay a monstrous serpent across the way. The Prince paused. Then he saw a road, smooth and pleasant, leading to the left. If he took it, he might avoid this danger. But what said the Princess? Instantly her words came back to him:

"So long as you do not fear, no harm can come to you." Well, he had never feared in all his life; he would not now. Stepping back a few paces, he broke into a little run and lightly vaulted over the barrier. Then he looked back, but the serpent had vanished.

Lighter of heart, the Prince went on his way. But now a storm arose. The rain beat upon him, the thunder roared, the lightning flashed, the wind raved and howled about his ears, and the Prince had to clutch his cap with both hands lest it be torn from his head. Now he was running along the road, and soon he saw a little hut by

the way. Here he might be sheltered, but no, there ahead of him rose the high wall, and the wicket gate must be there. He went on. Yes, there it was, very close now, but guarded by two wild, strange creatures, each with the body of a lion and the head and wings of an eagle.

"Griffins!" said the Prince to himself, for he had seen them carved in stone upon his brother's palace.

Slowly they walked back and forth before the wicket gate, while the Prince watched them. Then he saw there was a moment after they had passed each other, before they turned, when, if one was very quick, one might slip between. He waited until the great beasts were one on either side of the path; then a quick step brought him safely past them and to the wicket. It opened to his touch, and in an instant he was through and the gate was closed forever between him and the Enchanted Forest. He looked back, but there was no gate to be seen; only the huge wall, hung with streamers of delicate green ivy, shutting out all trace of the dangers through which he had passed.

Prince Orrell dropped upon a mossy bank to view the lovely scene before him. As far as his eye could reach, spread the beautiful fairy gardens. Fountains sprang high in the warm air and fell back into their marble basins with a splashing, tinkling sound like music;

the trees were pink and white with blossoms; the birds sang joyously, and flowers blossomed everywhere. From the knoll where the Prince had flung himself he could see a little river flowing between its mossy banks, singing to itself a low, happy song. Over it were sprung carved white marble bridges, and a little beyond rose the palace of the Fairy Felis. It, too, was of glittering white marble, and its slender spires stood out like lacework against the blue of the sky. The Prince's heart beat faster.

"It is there I shall find the Princess Aza," he said, and springing to his feet, he walked swiftly in the direction of the palace.

When he reached the great doors he paused, seeing no one there. But a voice called:

"Enter, Prince Orrell. The Fairy Felis awaits thee." The Prince entered the doors and saw a long flight of marble steps. These led him up into a lofty hall, set with columns of pink marble, hung with garlands of roses. At the farther end was a throne, upon which sat the Fairy Felis. Her robes of rosy gossamer trailed about her; her butterfly wings were folded, and she sat quite still until the Prince stood at the foot of the throne, cap in hand, bowing low. Then, in a voice that sounded like water flowing, like bird songs, like all sweet things growing, she said:

"Welcome, Prince Orrell. Your wanderings have brought you far. What seek you?"

"Oh, potent fairy," the young Prince made answer. "I seek to serve the Princess Aza. Will you grant me your aid?"

"Yes," answered the Fairy Felis, "since it was for this purpose I drew you to this kingdom. For long years, Prince Orrell, I have watched you, believing you were brave and fearless enough to rescue the Princess Aza, and when the right time came, I brought you here." Then rising, she said:

"Come with me and I will show you the Princess at her work."

They passed together from the hall into a long gallery from which they could look out upon the gardens. At the end the fairy paused a moment, then opened a door leading into a small room. She entered and the Prince following saw, in the center of the room, the Princess Aza bending over a loom in which was stretched a glittering web of gold and pearls. On her right lay a little pile of slender, golden cords; on her left a tray of great milky pearls, pierced through. They had entered so softly that the Princess did not hear them. She worked on, weaving the golden cords, threading the pierced pearls where two cords were crossed. For quite a time

she worked, until she had taken up the last cord and the last pearl. Then she stepped back from the loom, and clasping her hands together, exclaimed, joyfully:

"The net is finished!"

The Fairy Felis moved forward, and the Princess looked up to see her and Prince Orrell. She blushed, but spoke first to the fairy.

"Godmother," she said, "my task is done. The net is complete."

"Then take it from the loom and give it to me," said the fairy.

The Princess obeyed. The golden cords glittered, the pearls glowed as the fairy took the long web in her hands.

"Through many days, through months and even years, hath the Princess woven this, Prince Orrell," she said, "and now 't is ready for use by brave, strong hands to break the cruel spell which so long hath bound her."

The Prince stepped forward.

"For me?" he asked eagerly. "May I be so happy as to break that spell?"

For reply the Fairy Felis turned to the Princess.

"Goddaughter," she said, "it rests with thee. He who saves thee from the wicked enchanter's power can claim thy hand as his reward. But only he can rescue

thee who already holds thy heart. Is Prince Orrell that one?" The Princess Aza, blushing like a rose, answered:

"If Prince Orrell desires to break the spell, it is he alone who can." As she spoke, she held out her hand to the happy Prince, who bent over it, saying:

"Only my whole life's love and service can deserve such a reward."

Then the fairy smiled upon the Prince and Princess and said:

"Come, then, for the time draws near, and the spell cannot be broken too soon." She led the way from the palace, down through the fragrant gardens to the tiny river. On the way, there met them a company of young men to whom the Princess spoke. The Fairy Felis turned to Prince Orrell:

"These are the youths long supposed to have been lost in the Enchanted Forest," she said. "I brought them as far as my palace, where they have worked faithfully for the Princess. They have beaten the gold, twisted the cords, and pierced the pearls for the magic net. Now when the spell which binds the Princess is broken, they will be free to return to their homes."

They had now reached the brink of the river, and the Princess again joined them. Then the fairy turned to the Prince and said:

"When you reach the palace, Prince Orrell, go at once to the King and invite him to be present in the courtyard, with all his lords and ladies, a little before sunset. He is full of curiosity and will not fail to appear if you tell him you have something interesting to show him. Take this net, conceal it under your cloak, and watch for the return of the White Peacock. As the bird nears the tower it will fly down, instead of up. When near enough to you, cast over it the magic net and hold it tightly together, no matter what happens." She paused and handed to Prince Orrell the golden web. He took it, saying:

"I will obey you in everything."

"Then," said the fairy, "the Princess Aza will be forever free, and when the magic spell which now holds her is broken, the Enchanted Forest will disappear, for it is unreal, as is all evil. Only that which is good is real and lasting. Now 't is time to go. This little stream flows into the river which washes the walls of the palace, and in this boat you can make the journey quickly."

As she spoke, the fairy waved her hand, and a little boat glided across the water to where they were standing. A brave little boat, all blue and scarlet, with a golden swan at the prow. The Prince thanked the fairy, bade farewell to her and the Princess, and stepped

into the boat. Swiftly down the winding stream floated the little craft, and when the Prince looked back, the blossoming trees had shut off his view of the fairy palace.

Faster and faster flew the boat, out of the tiny river into the larger one, and to the Prince it seemed but a few moments until he reached the palace of the King. He stepped out and the fairy boat turned and glided as swiftly up the stream as it had come down.

Without loss of time the Prince hastened to find the King. His Majesty was just stepping into the courtyard, attended by his guards, and here Prince Orrell met him.

"Your Royal Highness," he began, doffing his cap and bowing, "may I have a word with you?"

The King had been counting his money bags—there were a good many of them—and was in the best of humors, so he said:

"What now, young Curiosity? More questions to ask?" (You will remember that the King still did not know who his guest was.)

"No, your Majesty," replied Orrell; "I have nothing to ask but a favor. If it please you, will you do me the honor to be here, on this spot, with the entire Court, shortly before sunset this evening? I will have something wonderful to show your Majesty at that time." The King looked curiously at him.

"The King reddened, angrily"

"Something wonderful, eh?" he said. "Well, it will not do to miss that. You may count upon my presence," and he went away, laughing.

The Prince looked up at the sky. It wanted some time until sunset, so he went to his room and changed his dusty, travel-stained clothing for his ruby velvet, that he might do honor to the Princess and to the great hour of his life. Tucking the precious net under his cloak, and leaving behind him his peacock feather, he came down the stair to find the King and Court already assembled. Having waited for him a few moments, the King was getting quite cross and as the Prince approached he snapped out:

"What is this wonderful thing you have to show?"

"I scarcely know yet myself, your Majesty, but I can assure you it will be most interesting."

The King reddened, angrily.

"You scarcely know yourself?" he repeated. "Have a care, young man, have a care. It would be dangerous to play any tricks on the King."

"Your Royal Highness," answered Prince Orrell, gravely, "I have too much regard for the dignity of the King's position, and my own, for trick playing."

"*Your* position!" snorted the King. "Why, who are you, anyway?"

"I am Orrell, oft called 'the Wandering Prince,' " answered the young man.

The King gasped.

"Well, well," he stammered, for he knew the great power of those three kings who were brothers to the Prince, "of course I did not know—I would not—" but Prince Orrell was not paying attention to him. His eyes were on the sky, and the King, looking up, felt both angry and afraid. Why had he not remembered what always happened at sunset? Now here was that annoying peacock flying down toward them, instead of up into its tower. And every one was looking at it, too. Nearer and nearer it came, flying slowly.

"Shoo, shoo," cried the King, desperately, but it only came the closer. The people watching its motion did not see that Prince Orrell had taken from under his cloak a shining net, but as the peacock reached his side there was a flash of gold and pearls, and the magic web enveloped the bird. Then he caught the ends in his strong, brown hands and held them fast.

Suddenly a cloud, black as night, filled the courtyard. From it thunder roared and lightning darted; shrieks, moans, wails, rent the air; a sound as of great wings beat against the towers and palace walls, and the harsh screams of the frightened peacocks mingled with

the uproar. The terror-stricken people clutched each other and stopped their ears or hid their eyes from the fearful sights and sounds. The Prince held fast to the net!

Then, as suddenly as it had come, the cloud vanished, and with it disappeared all its train of evils. And there, by the Prince's side, stood a beautiful creature, tall and fair, with wondrous deep-blue eyes. And over her pale gold hair, and down the glistening satin of her gown, streamed a net whose meshes bore great milky pearls.

The spell was broken!

An old man with long flowing beard, clad in silken robes of amber, stepped forward and took one long look at the lovely vision. Then he dropped upon his knees before her:

"Oh, Princess Aza, Princess Aza," he cried, and then his voice choked with sobs, and he bent and kissed the hem of her flowing gown. She put out her hand and raised him, saying:

"You know me then, good Aroff?"

"Could I forget my Princess, whom I have known from her babyhood?" he made answer.

But here the rest of the Court came crowding up, for they, too, now saw it was the Princess Aza. They laughed, they wept, they kissed her garments, they bore her into the palace, not stopping until they had reached

the vast Hall of Audience and placed her on the throne. Prince Orrell, well pleased, followed behind the throng.

When the Princess could speak, for her own tears, she raised her hand for silence, and when the people became quiet, said:

"Where is my uncle, the King?"

Sure enough, where was the King? No one had seen him since the cloud rolled away and the Princess appeared in her right form. The Princess turned to the Prime Minister, the noble Aroff, and said:

"Have the King sought for."

And the Prime Minister said to the Captain of the Guard, rather grimly:

"Find our former King and bring him here."

So the guard started to find the King. High and low they sought him in the palace. Then they went to the great gate and outside, squeezing into his carriage, they found him. Squeezing? Yes, for the carriage was so filled with his money bags there was scarcely room for the King.

"Hold, sir!" cried the Captain of the Guard, but the King waved an impatient hand at him.

"Go about your business," he said. "What do you mean by trying to detain me when I am about to go away?"

"You cannot go away," said the Captain, firmly. "The Princess Aza commands your presence. You must come with me."

"I won't do it," said the King, flatly. "Why can't my niece let a poor old man alone when he is going away and leaving her everything?" But the Captain persisted, and, almost by force, they brought the King to the palace and placed him before the Princess Aza.

He did not look up at her, but said, in a queer, hurried fashion:

"Oh, so you have come back, Aza. Well, I think you 'll find everything all right. You 're looking well, yes, very well—" but his voice trailed off into silence.

"Where were you going, my uncle?" said the Princess, gently.

"I was just going to my—I mean to your castle in the mountains," he whimpered. "I 'm sure I never meant to trouble any one, and everything is yours, and why should people torment an old man who only wants to be let alone?" Here he broke into miserable tears and sank down on the steps of the throne. But the Princess Aza raised him quickly.

"There, my uncle," she said, "do not weep. You shall go to your castle in the mountains, if you like, and no one shall trouble you."

The King cheered up and dried his tears.

"And may I take my money bags with me?" he inquired, eagerly.

"Yes," replied the Princess. "They and the castle in the mountains, with all it holds, are yours."

"Really, Aza," said the now smiling King, "you are a very nice girl, a very nice girl, indeed," and he hurried away, forgetting to say good-by.

"Attend my uncle, the King," commanded the Princess, looking at the Captain of the Guard; and bowing very low, he hastened to obey. With his men he followed the old man to the gate and helped him in the carriage with respectful attention. But as soon as it started, they all hurried back to the palace, not to miss anything.

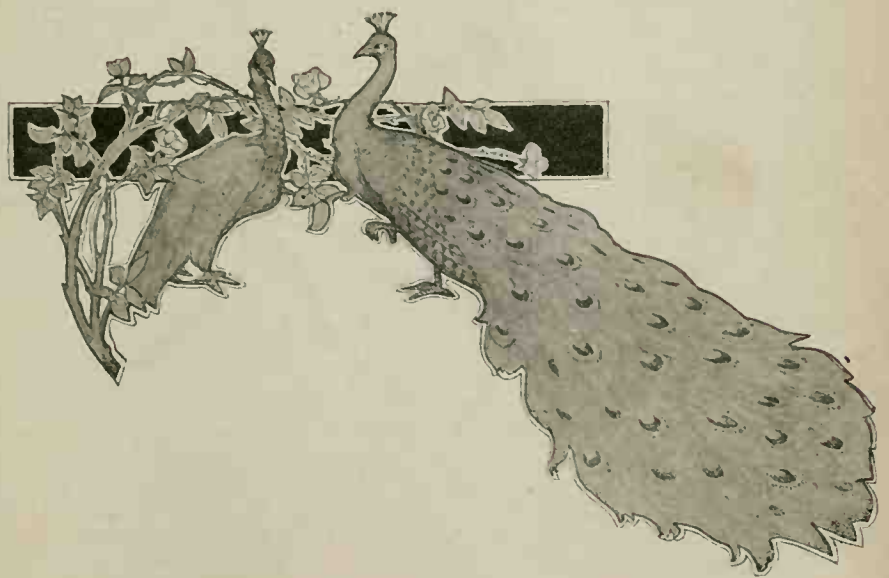
The Princess had called Prince Orrell to her side and was telling her people the story of her enchantment and how the cruel, magic spell had been broken.

"The end you saw," she said. "Only one brave and strong, who knew no fear, could free me. And this one is he whom men call 'the Wandering Prince,' of whom you all know. He holds the promise of my hand. He holds already," here she grew pink as any rose, "my heart. What have my people to give Prince Orrell?"

In the midst of a deep silence the Prime Minister stepped forward.

"If I may speak for thy people," he said, "I believe they would say: 'To him who holds the heart of Princess Aza, we give our hearts; to him who holds the promise of her hand, we give our faith; to him who has been brave, strong and true enough to free her, and restore her to us, we pledge our loving and loyal support as to our Prince, to reign over us, with thee, our beloved Princess Aza!"

When he ceased, there arose a joyous shout which rang so loud and clear it soared beyond the limits of the palace walls, into the still evening air, and reached the ears of a loveless, selfish old man who was driving along the lonely road to the castle in the mountains.



THE PINK TOPAZ

"The Princess peeped through her oriel window."

THE PINK TOPAZ

THE Princess had lost her Pink Topaz ring, and the palace was being turned inside out and upside down as the entire Court rushed hither and thither searching for it. All sorts of missing articles turned up, everything that had been lost for years,—everything, that is, save the Princess's ring. The tumult had reached even the Astrologer's Tower, that nook where perched the Wisest Man in the Kingdom, writing the history of King Yolo's family.

Whereas he would have smiled calmly over the loss of anything else (except his salary), he now, having shut

his glasses in his book, was searching madly for them in order to join in the hunt for the Pink Topaz.

It was he, the Wisest Man, who understood more fully than any one else how terrible a calamity had befallen the Princess Lotis in the loss of her ring. The first chapter of his History was given to a description of the jewel, with footnotes which took up twice as much space as the chapter. It had been in the family for twenty-seven generations, dating from Yolo the Invincible, to whom it had been given by a great magician. It was a clear, transparent gem, in color like the petal of a wild rose, or the first flush of dawn in the eastern sky. Its surface was cut in a curious magic cipher which even the Wisest Man himself did not understand.

Usually the same tint as the stone, at times these faint tracings glowed and flashed like lines of fire, whilst the Princess noted the change half in awe, half in pleasure at the jewel's beauty and the fair fortune which it foretold. For to the family which owned it, and especially to the wearer of it, the Pink Topaz brought Wisdom, Strength, and Happiness, and its occasional flashes of fire denoted some unusual stroke of good luck. Imagine, then, how great a misfortune was its loss!

The King had sent out heralds in all directions with promise of great reward to the lucky finder, and already

half the kingdom was searching for the lost ring. When the reward was increased to a million of ducats, the other half joined in the hunt. But, although three days had passed and there seemed to be nowhere else to look, the Pink Topaz was as hopelessly lost as ever.

Then King Yolo added to the million of ducats a far greater reward, the hand of the Princess; and heralds were sent into all the adjoining kingdoms with his proclamation.

Then all the princes of all those kingdoms donned their armor, mounted their steeds, and clattered into King Yolo's territory to search for the missing gem and win the hand of the beautiful Princess Lotis.

When she heard the first ring of horses' hoofs upon the flagstones of the great courtyard, the Princess peeped through her oriel window for a glimpse of the newcomer. An iron-gray charger pranced below, his scarlet trappings flecked with foam, the breath of the wind in his tangled mane. In the saddle sat Prince Valmir, noblest, bravest, best of all who rode that day to win King Yolo's daughter.

Dark locks waved across his broad brow; the red of the pomegranate stained the clear olive of his cheek and dyed the firm, close lips; silken lashes veiled, but could not dim, the brilliance of eyes darker than midnight, flashing with high courage, hope, and right resolve. Suddenly

"The Wisest Man was still hunting for his glasses"

the Prince glanced up at the window, catching the glint of a golden head, when a cloud of snowy lace, descending, shut out the vision fair.

All night long belated princes were arriving, but no hoofbeat reached the ears of Princess Lotis, through whose dreams the iron-gray charger pranced, bearing a princely rider with soft, dark eyes.

Now, while the Wisest Man was still hunting for his glasses, to enable him to join in the search for the ring, he was heard to say that the Pink Topaz had been lost once before, in the time of Yolo the Unlucky, thirteen generations back, and was found in the most distant corner of the kingdom. How it got there, tradition did not say, but there was an account of the finding in footnote nine hundred and thirty-seven, in the first chapter of his History. No one took the trouble to look up the footnote, but the tradition, coupled with the knowledge that the Princess had been out hunting over a large stretch of country the day her ring disappeared, left no spot in the kingdom too unlikely to be searched.

Each day, when the various princes rode out to hunt anew for the missing jewel, as the gray charger shot across the drawbridge like a bolt from a crossbow, Prince Valmir looked back at the oriel window. Sometimes he saw the sun gleam on golden locks; anon he caught the curve of

coral lips, and once a white hand waved to him in greeting. But when the other princes chanced to look up, they saw only a cloud of snowy drapery drawn close against the pane.

Morning after morning they rode away, eager and hopeful; evening after evening they rode back, wearied and dejected, whilst the Princess Lotis wept behind her oriel window.

As Prince Valmir galloped along the highway early one morning, there arose suddenly, in front of him, a very old and poor-looking woman. She was almost under the horse's hoofs, but the Prince reined in the fiery steed with a strong hand, and said:

"Take heed, good dame! Lookest thou, too, for the Princess's ring, and on the King's highway?"

"Nay," she answered, "I do but gather mushrooms. Oh, buy them, kind sir."

"I have no use for them," he began, but the old woman pleaded:

"Ah, buy them, noble sir. 'T would be an act most kind."

Taking from his girdle a broad gold piece, the Prince dropped it into her basket, saying, with a smile:

"This is thine. Wish me success in my quest."

Giving rein to his steed, he would have passed on,

but ere the gray could take a step, the old woman laid her hand on his bridle. The horse shivered, then stood still.

"Thou wilt not find the ring," she said. The Prince started.

"But the reward shall be thine," she added.

She seemed to grow taller, and smiled at him with eyes dark as his own. Her hand dropped from the bridle and the gray plunged forward, fearfully.

Although Prince Valmir thought of the old woman's words during the day, he quite forgot them in the exciting news which greeted him on his return to the palace at dusk.

Day after day the Princess watched at the oriel window for tidings of her lost jewel. At nightfall, as the princes rode wearily back, she eagerly scanned each face, but found hope in none. She could not eat; she could not sleep; she grew so pale that even the Wisest Man, who was still searching for his glasses, observed it and said the Princess would better go out in the fresh air. So she wandered listlessly into the garden, where she had not been since the disappearance of the Pink Topaz, and sat down by the brookside.

Now the worst of all to her was the haunting sense the Princess had had from the beginning that she herself had misplaced the ring. But she had thought and thought,

and wept and wept until eyes and head and heart ached together, all to no purpose. And now she sat by the brook in absolute despair.

By and by she observed that the goldfish in the stream were behaving in a very curious manner. They were leaping up out of the water to look at her.

"It is because I have so long forgotten to feed them," thought she, remorsefully, but that did not quite explain their mysterious actions. Every little fish, as it came swimming by, popped up in the same place, directly under a pink blossoming shrub at her side. The Princess grew more and more interested.

"They seem to be trying to tell me something," she thought, and as one little fish made a desperate leap toward the shrub, her eyes followed its motion. A sunbeam struggled through the dense shade overhead and fell upon something gleaming among the blossoms. The Princess's heart gave a great bound, for there, hanging on a little twig, was—the Pink Topaz!

And then she remembered that the last time she had fed the goldfish, fearing her ring might drop in the stream, she had hung it on the little bush, only in bud then, and forgotten all about it.

"Dear little fishes," she cried, as she seized it, "you

shall never be neglected again! If I had remembered you I should long ago have had my ring."

Here the goldfish gave joyous flops.

"Now—" began the Princess, when she stopped suddenly, for she remembered that Prince Valmir could not claim the reward she had hoped would be his. Thoughtfully she drew the precious ring from her finger and sat looking at it for a long, long time. At last, with a sigh of satisfaction, she rose, dropped the jewel in her pocket, and turned toward the palace. Arriving there, she sent a page to the King to announce that the Pink Topaz had been recovered and the finder would that night claim the reward, but, until then, would prefer to remain unknown.

The Court buzzed with excitement and curiosity, although by common consent Prince Valmir was declared to be the fortunate man. The great news met each prince as he rode in at the outer gate, and stifled hope forever in his heart. Yet each was eager to see upon whom the reward would be bestowed, and the vast audience hall was filled when the hour arrived.

At the end of the hall a dais covered with crimson cloth supported the throne of King Yolo the Twelfth. Above the golden carving of his chair glowed a magnificent sunburst of jewels; sapphires bluer than a summer night's sky; emeralds of tenderer green than young spring

leaves; amethysts that caught their tints from far-off purple hills; opals that united all the hues of sea and sky and land; diamonds unnumbered, and in the very center of all, a wonderful ruby of great size and untold splendor.

Upon the throne sat the King, clad in his purple and ermine robes, the crown upon his head, the scepter in his hand. At his right was placed, a little lower than his own, the chair of the Princess, while on his left Prince Valmir stood, all those other woebegone princes ranged beyond him.

A strip of crimson cloth reached from the throne to the bronze entrance doors at the farther end of the hall. On either side stood the people, waiting to greet the happy man who had won their Princess.

All down the sides the torches flamed, casting fitful shadows up among the massive rafters of carven oak, black with age. As the light flickered upon them it brought into view grinning monsters that supported the huge timbers,—griffins and dragons that, once seen, peopled the darkness long after for terrified children. It fell on banners pendent from the walls, their threads of blue and scarlet and gold now gleaming in the light, now hanging somber in the shadow. It shone below on burnished shields, and mirrored itself in a thousand tiny

points on helm and cuirass, mace and spear. It lay softly on the uncovered heads of silent, waiting people.

Suddenly there sounded a blast of trumpets, thrilling each listener, and the doors swung open to admit—the Princess. Only the Princess, but how fair, how beautiful to the eyes of her faithful subjects, to all those unlucky princes, and to that one nearest the throne, whose heart was nigh to breaking.

Slowly she advanced up the long hall, her little silken-shod feet falling lightly as snowflakes. No sound was heard save the rustle of her robes of cloth of gold, down which streamed her shining tresses, dulling all the luster of her garments. A circlet of diamonds rested on her head, but the little hands, clasped tightly together, were bare of jewels. Her long dark lashes swept her cheeks, upon which the color now glowed, now paled, as she moved along.

Her father rose to lead her to her place, but the Princess Lotis stopped at the foot of the throne and, holding out her hand to the King, said:

"Gracious Sovereign and father, behold in me, the Princess Lotis, the finder of the Pink Topaz!"

The King was too astounded to respond at once, and the Princess continued:

"In returning the ring, oh, my father, I claim the reward thou hast offered for it."

"Oh," said the King, "the ducats. Well, 't is but just." Turning to the Keeper of the Royal Treasure, he commanded:

"Pay to my daughter, the Princess Lotis, one million ducats, the reward due her as finder of the ring."

"Do thou," said the Princess to the Keeper of the Royal Treasure, "distribute to-morrow among the poor of the kingdom those ducats, to each one according to his need."

The King nodded approvingly, and a murmur of admiration and affection arose from the listening throng. Then the Princess turned again toward her father with a heightened color in her face, and spoke in tones that were not quite steady:

"My father, there is yet another reward."

"True," answered King Yolo, a little puzzled, "but that—"

"That also, 'the hand of the Princess,' I demand as finder of the ring."

The King smiled.

"Is not that thine own, my daughter?"

"It is the right to dispose of it, most gracious Sovereign, I now ask," breathed the Princess in tones heard

only by the King and Prince Valmir, who was bending eagerly forward.

The monarch frowned in perplexity, then, as his eyes fell on the Prince, his brow lightened and he answered:

"Be it so. As the finder of the ring I grant to thee 'the hand of the Princess,' to dispose of as thou shalt desire."

There was a moment's pause, and then the Princess Lotis took a step toward Prince Valmir and held out her hand. Down upon his knee fell that gallant knight, and pressed his lips to the little hand he had believed forever lost to him. When he arose, the King handed him the Pink Topaz, saying:

"Take with my daughter this jewel, which holds the fortunes of our family. All that I have shall be thine, and thou shalt be as a son to me."

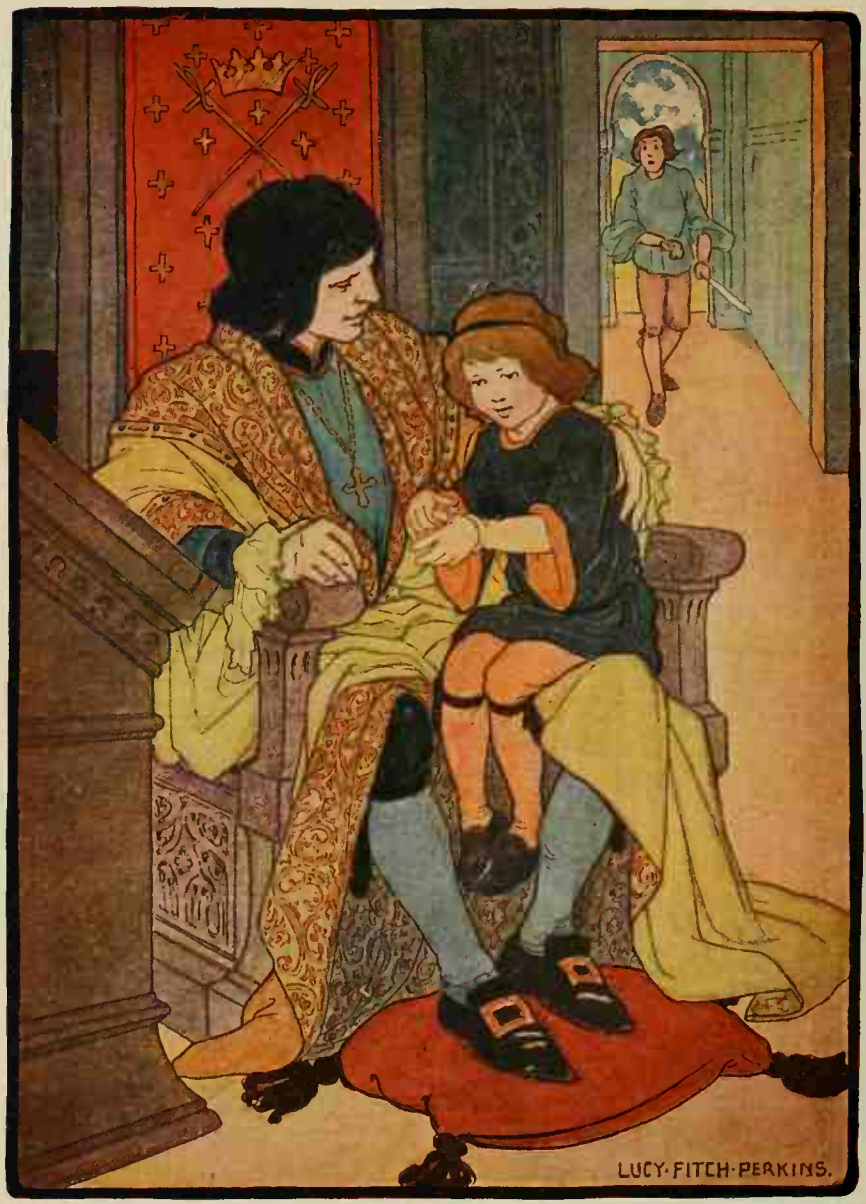
Bowing low, the Prince received it, slipped it upon the hand of the Princess which he still held, and they knelt at the feet of the King for his blessing.

Then a great shout arose from all the people which rang through the rafters and stirred the silken banners and echoed from the brazen shields.

And the Wisest Man, who scorned festivities,

hastened back to his History, where he found his long-lost glasses, and immediately proceeded to record, with many footnotes, the second finding of the Pink Topaz.

THE LITTLE BROWN BIRD



"Joyaine held it there and gazed at it with pride."

THE LITTLE BROWN BIRD

PRINCE JOYAINE was growing sleepy. It was a warm day, and the palace was very, very still. In the large room where he had been playing, his father, the King, sat at a table writing, writing, writing. Beside the door stood a soldier, very straight and tall, in a uniform of blue and scarlet with much gold upon it. The little boy had looked at him for a long time, but, though they were great friends, to-day Kenni would not play with him. Indeed, he scarcely noticed the child, but kept his grave eyes fastened upon the King. For a while Joyaine had been happy looking out of the window, waving his hand and throwing kisses to his little twin sister, Joyeuse, who was walking in the garden with their mother,

the Queen. He had laughed when she tried to throw violets up to him, and failed. She was too little, of course, and only four years old. To be sure, he also was four years old, but he was two whole inches taller, Nursey said, and oh, ever so much stronger.

By and by, though, little Yusa and his mother had gone in and he had nothing to amuse himself with. He sat down on a low stool, his dimpled elbows on his chubby knees, his rosy face in his pink palms, to wait until his father was ready to talk to him.

When the King began to write he had a large pile of papers at his left hand. As he finished writing on each one, he folded it and laid it at his right. The little boy watched the broad goose quill move up and down as the King signed his name, and saw with pleasure that there were but a few more papers on his left. Presently the last was signed and folded. Then the King made a neat package of them, and tied a piece of tape about it. Then he lit a small taper, held a bit of red sealing wax in the blaze until it melted, and dropped some wax upon the package and pressed his ring upon it. The little Prince watched him with great interest. The King then held the bundle of papers out toward the soldier and, giving him a few words of direction, sent him away with them.

Then he turned to his son and held out his arms,

saying, "Come, Joyaine," and the little boy was lifted upon his father's knee.

"You have been very good and very patient, little Yana," he said, looking fondly at the child. "But remember, princes should always be very good and try also to be patient. You have waited a long time. Why did you not go and play with little sister Yusa?"

"I did for a while through the window," answered the Prince, "but I wanted to be with you, father." The King patted his cheek and smiled.

"Why was it, father, that Kenni would not play with me to-day?" the child asked.

"Captain Kenni was waiting to carry my papers," answered the King. "A soldier on duty cannot stop to play."

"I mean to be a soldier like Kenni when I grow up," said the boy. "Could I be a soldier and a prince, too?"

"Oh, yes," replied the King. "I was a soldier when I was a prince."

"Were you, father," cried the child, eagerly, "and did you wear such beautiful clothes as Kenni—with gold on them?"

"Quite," laughed his father. "Indeed, if I remember aright, I had even more gold on my uniform than Captain Kenni."

"I wish I could have seen you, father," sighed the Prince, then he added:

"Do you like being King as well as being a soldier?"

"Not always," answered the King, and then he, too, sighed, for he thought of certain of his unruly subjects who were even then trying to make trouble in his kingdom.

The Prince's eyes fell on the King's ring, still lying on the table, and he asked:

"What were you doing, father, when you put your ring on the soft red stuff?"

"That is my signet ring, son, and I was sealing the papers with it. No one would dare break the seal, for every one could see it had the King's signet on it. See, Joyaine," and he showed the child the carving on the ring.

"Shall I have a ring like that when I grow up?" asked the Prince.

"You shall have this one, most likely, when you are King."

"May I put it on now, father?"

"I think you will not find it a very good fit," smiled the King, but he tried it on each chubby finger. Even when he came to the little fat thumb it was far too large, of course, but Joyaine held it there and gazed at it with pride.

"May I wear it just a little while?" he asked.

"You may," said his father, "but you will get rather tired holding it on, I suspect." The little boy looked over the table.

"You might tie it on with some of the string you put around the papers," he suggested. "Yusa's ring is tied on with a blue ribbon, because it is too big for her."

The King laughed heartily as he reached for the tape and tied it fast to the big ring, then around the dimpled wrist.

"I begin to think you are a boy of resource, Joyaine," he said.

Joyaine moved his hand in the sunshine to see the ring glitter. Then he said: "What is 'resource,' father?"

But the King did not answer. He was listening to a sound, a far-away sound like the buzzing of angry bees when their hive is disturbed. The child did not notice it; he was lost in admiration of his ring.

Then there were hurrying footsteps, and the King rose from his chair, the boy in his arms. The door burst open and a servant, white and trembling, ran into the room.

"Oh, your Majesty," he gasped, "the mob is at the

palace gate, but there is yet time to escape by the garden way."

"I will go and speak to them," said the King, and he put the little Prince down in his big cushioned chair.

"Do not go!" cried the man, "do not go! They are wild, crazy! Come this way, I beg, and escape before it is too late."

But the King was striding down the hall, and seeing he could not stop him, the man ran out of the other door, crying and wringing his hands. Prince Joyaine sat still in the chair. He did not know what it was that was "wild and crazy," but he was sure it would go away when his father spoke. Did not every one obey the King? So he turned to the enjoyment of his ring again.

The palace was very, very still, except for that far-off roar, and the great chair was so comfortable that presently the little curly head slipped down against the cushioned arm, the blue eyes closed, and Yana was fast asleep. From time to time excited people ran through the room and there was a distant sound as of iron striking upon iron, and later a smell of smoke, but the child slept on.

At last a frantic woman rushed into the room, crying:

"Yana, Yana, where are you, my Prince? Yana,

Yana!" She ran around the table and saw the boy in the big chair. As she seized him in her arms he opened his eyes and said, sleepily:

"Why, Nursey, here I am. What is the matter?"

"Fire, murder, death!" cried the woman as she held him tightly and ran from the room. He did not know what the words meant, he was such a little boy, but their sound frightened him.

"Where is my father?" he asked.

"Oh, I don't know, I don't know," sobbed his nurse. "He would go to speak to the mob."

Then it was the mob which was "wild and crazy," thought the little boy, and perhaps it would not go away when his father spoke. Was it like a lion or a bear, he wondered, and shuddered.

"Where is my mother?" he ventured.

"Oh, I don't know, I don't know," cried the woman, her tears falling fast.

"And my little sister Yusa?" he faltered.

"I don't know." It seemed to be all she could say.

They were running through the gardens, and he could hear the buzzing sound more plainly. Only now it was a roar, and, yes, it must be the mob which was making the awful sound. The child shut his eyes very tightly and clasped his arms close about his nurse's neck.

What was it his father had said? "Princes should be good and patient," that was it. He would try now to be, but oh, if he only had his father and mother and Yusa!

The tears rolled down his cheeks. Father had said something else like that once, a long time ago, when Joyaine was afraid of a large dog. "Princes should be brave and not cry." So he wiped away his tears with his chubby hand and tried not to be afraid. The nurse was walking now, and the child opened his eyes. They were in a shady lane which led from the gardens into the great forest, and it was growing dark. No sound could be heard.

"Nursey," he whispered, "I cannot hear the mob any more. It will not find us here, will it?"

"I don't know," sighed the weary woman. "When we get into the woods I must rest." She staggered on until they were well within the shadow of the trees, and was about to put the Prince down when a dead branch fell to the ground behind her with a great clatter.

"The mob!" she screamed in terror, and started on a run. In a few moments she caught her foot in the root of a tree and fell heavily to the ground. The child plunged from her arms and landed beyond a low shrub, stunned by his fall. His nurse scrambled to her feet and called:

"Yana, Yana, oh, my little one, where are you?" but the Prince did not hear. She groped about in the darkness in vain, calling his name. Presently she heard the far-off note of a night bird, and crying, "Yes, my little one, I am coming," she followed the sound until she was lost in the depths of the forest.

Although he stirred once or twice during the night, the little Joyaine did not open his eyes until the morning sun shone brightly into the great wood. Then he looked about in wonder. Where was he? In the garden, perhaps. But no, here were no flower beds, no fountains. He sat up and saw he was quite alone. His lip quivered, and again the tears dimmed the blue eyes.

"Princes should be brave and not cry!" called a cheery voice.

The startled child looked up quickly, but no one was in sight; only a little brown bird was hopping about on a low bough, and twittering as little birds do. It was very curious. Still it was true that princes should be brave and not cry. He wiped his eyes and got up from the ground. He would go home. Home! oh, no, for now he remembered the mob was there.

"The mob!" he cried aloud. "Will it come here?"

"No, no," said the cheery voice again; "it will never come here. Be brave and all will be well."

Again Joyaine looked to see who spoke, but there was only the little brown bird hopping about and twittering. Then it spread its wings and flew a little beyond.

"Come on," it seemed to say, and Joyaine followed through the wood.

The sun was high and he had walked quite a long way when he said, "I am so hungry."

The voice answered, "Then pick some berries."

There was the little brown bird fluttering above a bed of ripe, red strawberries. The child fell upon his knees and began eating them so fast that it kept his two small hands busy filling his rosy mouth. Then, when he had eaten all he possibly could, he said, "I am thirsty."

No one answered, and he looked for the little brown bird. It was flying over a bush, and when he followed he saw a little brook dancing along, sparkling in the sunshine. He found a shell on the bank and from it drank all he wanted of the clear water. Then he sat down to rest under a tree, and because the moss was so soft, and because he had walked a long way for such a little boy, and because the wood was very still, presently Prince Joyaine was fast asleep. And on a bough above his head a little brown bird sat, with folded wings, and watched over him.

"Why, what is this?" cried a great, hearty voice, and

the child wakened with a start to see a big, brown-bearded man bending over him. His eyes, too, were brown and very kindly, so the Prince felt no fear. He sat up and smiled.

"Who are you, little one?" said the man.

"I am Prince Joyaine," answered the boy.

"Prince Joyaine!" repeated the man. "Who is your father?" he asked quickly.

"Why, King Joyet," replied the child in surprise, "and I am his only son. But my sister Joyeuse is his daughter," he added. The man looked both puzzled and frightened.

"How came you here?" he asked.

"My nursey ran with me to the woods because—" he looked nervously around, then whispered, "because the mob was at the palace. But it will not come here," he added.

"No, no," answered the man. "But where is your nurse now?"

"I do not know," said the child, and his lip quivered. Here the man spied the great ring tied to the Prince's dimpled wrist.

"What is this?" he asked.

"It is my father's ring, his sig— something that he

puts in the soft red stuff. He said I might wear it a little while. Then the mob came and he went away."

"Truly," said the man, as he looked closely at it, "it is the King's signet; every one knows that." Then he gazed down at the little form leaning so confidingly against him.

"Oh, my poor little Prince!" he cried, and raised him in his arms.

"Will you take me to my father and my mother, and to my little sister Yusa?" asked the child, eagerly.

"Listen," said the man very gravely, as he sat down on the mossy bank. "I do not know how much you can understand, but wicked men have driven away the King and Queen and Princess Joyeuse. These same wicked men have burned a part of the palace and you cannot go back there. Be patient now and let me think what is best for you."

They both sat quiet until the man spoke again.

"It will be safest for you to go with me," he said. "Then these wicked men cannot find you. I am a wood-cutter and I live in the forest a long way from here. I have been to the town to buy supplies, and I have with me a new suit of clothes for my little boy, who must be near your age."

"I am four," stated the Prince with pride.

"And my Jodie is four," said the wood-cutter. "I shall take off your clothes and put his on you. Then if we meet any one you will pass as my child."

"Will he like you to give me his new clothes?" asked the Prince, anxiously.

"He does not know I have bought them," said the man as he began to undress the child. When he had taken off his little velvet coat he discovered around his neck a slender chain with a large gold locket swinging from it.

"What is this?" he asked.

"My locket," said Joyaine. "See, here is my mother's picture inside." He opened the locket and the man gazed upon a lovely, laughing face.

"Yes," he said, "it is the Queen. I have before seen pictures of her."

The child felt the tears coming again and shut the locket, quickly.

"I must take it, too," said the wood-cutter, and he laid it with the little coat. Then he took off the other clothes and soon had the boy dressed in the coarse blue suit he had bought for his own son.

"Your ring, too, my Prince," he said. "It will not be safe for you to wear it." The child held out his hand gravely while the man untied the tape from his wrist. He laid the ring with the locket and, rolling them up

inside of the clothes, put them all in the knapsack on his back from which he had taken Jodie's blue suit. Taking the boy by the hand, he led him on through the wood, and the child was glad to see, flying ahead of them, the little brown bird.

After a time the Prince's short legs became very tired and his little feet stumbled often. When the man saw this he said:

"There, I shall carry you a while, my Prince. We soon must cross the great highway which runs through the forest, and should we meet any one do you say nothing." He stooped and took up the child, and as they went on, the little fellow clasped his arms about the neck of his friend and was soon asleep. When they reached the broad highway there was a sound of hoofs and two horsemen came riding up. They stopped when they saw the man, and one called:

"Who are you, friend?"

"Joda the wood-cutter," answered he.

"Where have you been?"

"To the town, for supplies."

"Did you see any one in the wood as you came through?"

"So far as I know," answered the wood-cutter,

"there was no one in the wood but myself and the child. I saw no one else."

"Do you often take your child to town?" asked the horseman.

"Not often, sir," replied the man.

"I should think not, if you have to carry him home," laughed the other, and the horsemen rode on without further questioning.

In great relief the wood-cutter crossed the road with the sleeping Prince on his shoulder, and was soon lost to sight in the deep wood beyond.

Late that night he knocked at the door of a small log house in whose window twinkled a light.

"Who is there?" called a woman's voice.

"It is I, Marta. Open the door," he answered. The door was flung wide and a woman appeared on the threshold, saying:

"What has kept you so late, Joda? I began to fear you would not come to-night. And what have you?" she asked in great surprise, as the man strode in with the child in his arms. Carefully laying the sleeping boy on the bed, he drew his wife aside and said to her:

"He is a little lost child I found in the wood. I could not leave him there alone, so I have brought him home with me."

"'What have you?' she asked in great surprise"

"You did quite right, my husband," exclaimed the good woman. "The poor little child! We will take care of him, and if we cannot find his parents we will keep him for our own."

They bent over the sleeping child, and the motherly Marta kissed his cheek. Then she undressed him so gently that he did not waken, and laid him in the bed with her own little son.

The Prince was the first to open his eyes in the morning. He looked about in wonder. He lay in a strange bed in a strange room and, most curious of all, a strange child lay on the pillow by him; a little sleeping boy. He sat up in bed and then he saw, entering the door, his friend of yesterday, the big, brown-bearded man. He was very glad to see him and said:

"Oh, I thought I was lost again!"

The man smiled, then he came over and sat down on the edge of the bed.

"Do you remember what I said to you yesterday?" he asked in a low voice.

"You said you would take me to your house. Is this it?"

"It is. Do you remember why I said I should keep you with me?"

The child thought a moment, then answered:

"So those wicked men would not get me; those wicked men who drove away my father and my mother and—" but a big sob was coming on, so he had to stop. The wood-cutter put an arm about him.

"Be brave, little one," he said. "I trust with all my heart we shall find them for you again. But now it is best that no one should know who you are. You must have a new name. How would you like to be called Marco?" The child studied a moment.

"It is a nice name," he answered. "I will be called Marco."

"Very well," said the wood-cutter, and he rose to go. Just then he glanced at his own son and saw two wondering black eyes fixed on the Prince.

"Good morning, son," he said, but the child only stared at the newcomer. Finally he pointed one solemn forefinger at him and asked:

"Who is he?"

"He is a little playmate I have brought you."

"Where did you get him, father?"

"I found him in the wood," answered his father.

"What is his name?"

"You may call him Marco, and you must be very good to him," and he left the room.

The Prince squirmed a little under Jodie's steady

gaze, but presently it changed to a smile and the wood-cutter's son said:

"Are you really going to stay and be my playmate?"

"Yes," answered the Prince.

"I like you, Marco; I like you. I am glad you have come," cried the boy. And the mother, hearing their voices, came in smiling.

"Who is this you have with you, Jodie?" she asked.

"It is Marco, mother. Father found him in the forest and brought him home to play with me. Aren't you glad, mother?"

"Yes, indeed," she answered as she kissed both children. Then she dressed them and took them out into the big room.

And now a new life had begun for the little boy who was called Marco. He received the greatest kindness from both the wood-cutter and his wife, while Jodie hovered about him in a state of rapture, but his heart often ached for his people and his home. Jodie brought forth his treasures,—moss, acorns, shiny stones, and bird nests outgrown by their feathered families,—and by and by little Marco played cheerfully with him under the great oak tree which overshadowed the log house.

In a very short time the wood-cutter went again to the town. When he came back he carried an iron box, not

very large, which he set down in the shadow of the big tree before he knocked at the door. When Marta opened it her first words were:

"Did you find the child's parents?"

"No," answered her husband; "I did not find them and I heard of no one in the town who had lost a child," for he did not wish to tell even his wife who the little Prince really was. It would be safest for him to remain unknown for a time.

"Oh, the poor little child!" said the kind Marta, wiping away a tear. "We must keep him and do the best we can for him, now."

"That is my good wife," said Joda, patting her on the shoulder.

The two children were sleeping, and as soon as he was quite sure his wife, too, slept, the wood-cutter stepped quietly out of the door. He was gone a long time; then he came into the house softly and went to the room where the children were. Lifting little Marco in his arms he carried him out into the warm summer night.

The boy murmured, sleepily, "Nursey, nursey," but when he opened his eyes he saw the bearded face above him. Reaching up, he patted the brown cheek and said, "Dear Joda," for he had come to be very fond of his kind friend.

The man set him down on the soft moss under the oak, and as he looked about in the bright moonlight he saw, yawning at his side, a deep, black hole reaching down under the great tree. Then Joda, standing tall and straight before him, said gravely:

"Who are you?"

The boy looked up, startled.

"Do you mean who am I, really?"

"Yes," answered the man.

"I am Prince Joyaine."

"Who is your father?" continued the wood-cutter.

"My father is King Joyet. I am his only son, but my sister Joyeuse is his daughter." The man picked up a little bundle and unfolded it before him.

"What are these?" he asked.

"Why, they are my clothes," cried the child, "that you took off of me in the wood."

"How did you get to the wood?" was the next question.

"My nursey carried me there."

"Why?" persisted the wood-cutter.

"Because," faltered the child, "because the mob was after us." He shuddered, for in his mind he saw the mob as a great beast, clawing, biting, and roaring with that awful sound he had not yet forgotten.

Joda folded together the clothes and laid them in the iron box. Then he held up something which glittered in the moonlight.

"What is this?" he asked.

"It is my chain and locket," answered Joyaine.

"What is in the locket?"

"My mother's picture," said the child, with a sob. Joda laid it in the iron box. Then he held up something else which shone in the light.

"And what is this?" he said.

"It is my father's sig—"

"Signet," prompted the wood-cutter.

"Yes, signet ring," assented the child. "He pushes it into the soft red stuff on his papers."

"Why has it the string?" Joda asked again.

"Because it was too big for me, and my father tied it on. My sister Joyeuse has hers tied with a blue ribbon," explained the Prince. The wood-cutter placed the ring also in the iron box and closed it tight. Then he kneeled down by the edge of the hole and lowered the box into it. Without a word he began to shovel in the dirt upon it, stamping it down with his feet, while the child looked on in wonder. Then he covered the fresh earth with moss until no one could say there had ever been a hole there. Standing then before the boy he said:

"Prince Joyaine, never forget who you are; never forget you are the son of the King; never forget what is buried in the iron box under the oak tree." Then he knelt down and took the boy's little dimpled hand, kissed it, and laid it on his head.

"You are my Prince," he said. "I am your faithful subject. May you be spared to come into your own."

Then he arose and taking the child in his arms said, in soothing tones:

"There, little Marco, we will go back to bed, now."

Re-entering the house, he laid the child by the sleeping Jodie and in a few moments Joyaine, too, was fast asleep. The next morning he was quiet and thoughtful, and when he went to play under the oak he looked all around as if seeking something. But he was a very little boy, and as the day wore on he ceased to think of what he had seen in the night.

It was shortly after this that the Scholar came to the log house in the wood. A very wise man, indeed, was he, one who had studied many books and traveled in many lands. He could tell you of the stars, their names and how they moved across the heavens, what time they rose and set; he could tell you about the trees, where they grew and what fruit they bore; he knew about the flowers; about the bees and butterflies; about the birds, their names

and how they built their nests,—oh, he could tell you everything you most would like to know. Then, of course, he knew the histories of many men and countries. Yet, because with all this knowledge he was continually trying to get more, and studied often far into the night, men called him the Scholar, sometimes the Great Scholar, and the town was very proud of him.

It was Jodie who first spied him coming through the wood, and because he was shy of strangers he ran to call his mother. She came smiling to the door, and when the traveler drew near he made her a bow as though she were some great lady. And Marta, that he might know she had manners if she did live in the woods, made him a deep curtsy. Then she said:

"Will you come in and rest, sir? You look tired, and the day is warm."

"I thank you," answered the Scholar, "I shall be very glad to rest. I thought to spend a day in the wood but I have walked farther than I meant."

"My husband will soon be home," said Marta, "and he will be pleased to find a visitor, for they are rare indeed with us." And when Joda came he was glad to see some one from the town who could tell him the news. As they talked, he said:

"These are troublous times in the kingdom."

"Troublous, indeed," answered the Scholar, gravely. "Since our good King was driven away, everything has gone badly. The people already are grumbling at the new King. They say all he cares for is to wring money from them." Joda looked around quickly when the King was mentioned, but Marco was out under the oak tree, too far away to hear.

"Are the King's family with him?" he asked in a low voice. "I mean our own King Joyet." The Scholar looked surprised.

"I suppose so, of course," he answered. "He and the Queen, with the little twin Prince and Princess, Joyaine and Joyeuse, have all disappeared, though no one seems to know where they have gone. But now," he said, rising, "I must return to the town, since I am quite rested."

"No, no!" cried both Joda and his wife. "You must stay with us. It is too far to the town to think of going to-night." So the Scholar thanked them and stayed. In the morning he said, with some hesitation:

"I have long wished to find so quiet and peaceful a spot as this, and I wonder if you would let me spend my summer here? I should be glad to pay whatever you say, if I should not be too much trouble."

"You would be no trouble at all," said Marta,

heartily; then she looked to her husband to speak. Joda thought for a moment, then he said to the Scholar:

"I know who you are, sir; I have sometimes seen you in the town, and I should feel honored to have you with us. But not for money. You see those two little boys under the oak?"

"Yes," nodded the Scholar.

"I have thought a great deal about them of late, and wondered how they would ever learn anything here in the forest. If you would be willing to teach them a little, whatever they are able to learn, we should be very deeply in your debt."

And so matters were arranged, and the Scholar settled down in the log house for the summer, and began to teach the children. Now Jodie had never studied anything, but had played the live-long day, and he did not take at all kindly to the lessons. Still, he tried hard to pay attention and to remember what his teacher said. To little Marco, though, the lessons brought only pleasure. King's sons are taught almost as soon as they can speak, and the study to which he had been used in his life at the palace was a comfort to the child. Then he had always, though so young, shown a great eagerness to learn, and now seized with joy upon the books given him. Imagine the surprise and delight of the Scholar to find such a

"Their teacher would take them for a walk in the wood"

pupil in the depths of the forest. In the morning they had an hour or two of study and later their teacher would take them for a walk in the wood and point out to them the birds and butterflies, telling them their names and

habits; or he would have them learn about the different trees and flowers they saw. This Jodie liked far better than his books, but best of all he liked getting back to play when the lessons were over. One night the Scholar said to Joda:

"Friend, I am keeping only one half of our contract."

"How is that?" asked the wood-cutter.

"Only one of your boys will learn," answered the other. "Jodie does not care for his lessons and, although he really tries, he does not seem able to learn much. But Marco," he went on with enthusiasm, "Marco is a born scholar. If I would allow it he would be poring over his books the entire time."

Joda smoked his pipe a while in silence, then he said:

"Never mind Jodie; the poor child has not been used to study. Teach him what he can learn, but give Marco the most of your time. It is much more necessary that he should have an education than Jodie."

The Scholar was surprised—you see he thought both children were Joda's sons—but he asked no questions and was really glad to be allowed to devote himself to Marco.

So the pleasant summer passed and the time came for the good teacher to go back to the town. Jodie bade him

farewell rather cheerfully, but Marco clung to his friend with a heart too full for words.

"There, there," said the Scholar kindly, although his own eyes were misty, "the winter will not be so very long. Every time Joda comes to the town I shall send you books, and next summer I shall surely come again." So he kissed the child and went away.

Before the nights had grown cold, Marco had again been lifted from his bed and taken out under the oak tree. This time, when Joda, standing tall and grave before him, questioned: "Who are you?" the child answered readily enough:

"I am Prince Joyaine." And as the wood-cutter went on, he replied to each question, even to "What is buried under the oak tree?" without hesitation, though now the life in the palace had grown to seem almost a dream to him. And when he was laid back in his bed by Jodie, the deep sleep of childhood wrapped him round, dropping like a curtain between him and the memory of the past.

Summer and autumn, winter and spring melted into each other, and the Scholar came again. Another year went by, and another, until almost three had passed since Joda the wood-cutter found in the forest a little lost child and brought him to his own home. Marco was now seven

years old. Not very old, that, but he had changed from the chubby little Joyaine to a taller, more slender boy, still lovable and obedient as of old. Twice in each summer, under the oak tree, Joda had put the questions to him about his true self and life, and the child had answered correctly. But it was more as though he were reciting a lesson than that he really remembered. Joda saw this with anxiety, but there seemed nothing more he could do.

It was a warm day in early spring and the two boys were out under the oak tree, now beginning to be clothed in fresh young leaves. Jodie was lying on his back staring up at a squirrel on the branch above him, while Marco, as usual, was poring over a book. At an exclamation from Jodie he looked up and saw some one coming toward them. In a moment he knew him and was racing down the path to meet the Scholar.

The sound of their voices brought Marta to the door and she welcomed the guest warmly. So did Joda when he came home, yet each wondered what had brought the Scholar so early in the year. When the boys had gone to sleep, the visitor said:

"I come to you at an unusual time, my friends. I have been driven from the town, and I thought you would take me in."

"Driven from the town!" cried Marta with indignation. "You, so kind, so good to every one!"

"Indeed, we will take you in, and be glad to," said Joda. "But why did you have to leave?"

"I have told you," answered the Scholar, "that I once was the teacher of our good King Joyet, in his boyhood. After the new King came to the throne he sent for me to teach his son. It was never an easy task, for the boy was wild and unruly, but I did the best I could and things went fairly well until yesterday. Then the Prince, in a fit of rage, threw his book in my face and vowed he would study no more. I went at once to the King and told him this, adding that I declined hereafter to teach so rude a pupil. The King answered that in that case the sooner I left the town the better it would be for me. So I am here."

"And here you shall stay, just as long as you will," cried Joda, heartily. "It will be good for the children to have their lessons again, and Marta and I are always proud to have you for our guest."

"I thank you, my good friends," said the Scholar, reaching a hand to each. "I will stay for awhile; then I shall go into the next kingdom, where I shall surely find pupils in need of a master." So the matter rested for a time.

But now a sad, a very sorrowful thing came to pass. I wish I need not tell of it, but the story of Prince Joyaine would not be complete without it. The good, kind Joda was hurt by a falling tree. The little boys were with him, and they came running to the house in a great fright to call Marta and the Scholar. It was near the road which led to the town, and some men passing helped them lift the tree off of poor Joda and carry him to the house. He could not speak or move. But after he was placed in his own bed and the men were gone, he looked at the Scholar, who held Marco by the hand, and tried very hard to say something. The old man stooped down and Joda whispered faintly:

"Tell him—never forget."

These were his last words, and an hour later the good Joda had slipped away out of this life, and no one was left who knew that Marco was the son of a king.

After all was over, the weeping Marta said to the Scholar:

"I cannot live here now. I shall take my boy and go back to my father's house in the town."

"You mean your boys, do you not?" asked the old man.

"No," she answered. "Only Jodie belongs to me,

and I cannot ask my father to care for another child, dearly as I love Marco."

"Why, who is Marco, then?" cried the Scholar in great surprise.

"I do not know," said Marta. "My husband found him lost in the wood some three years ago. We never found his parents."

The Scholar sat puzzled and anxious. Who could the child be? What was to become of him? Well, that could be settled at least. He, himself, was well enough known as the teacher of King Joyet to find pupils even in another kingdom than this. He would take the boy for his own and make such a scholar of him as the world had rarely seen. When he told Marta he would take Marco as his son, she exclaimed:

"Oh, I am so glad the dear child has found such a father! I could not ask better for him."

The parting was sad, and yet Marco really loved and admired the good Scholar more than any one he knew, and when they were fairly started on their journey his spirits rose with each step. Out in the world he would be seeing and hearing and learning of new things every day. What more could a boy ask?

The spring was well under way, and with the roadside full of new flowers, the hedges full of new birds, and

"As they neared the gate a company of horsemen rode out"

the sky full of the old, old stars, every hour was a delight to the happy child. But it was a long, long journey to the capital of the next kingdom, and the old man drew a sigh of relief as its strong walls and watch towers finally came into view. As they neared the gate a company of horsemen rode out, the train of a nobleman going for a day's hunting. A great personage was he, clothed in russet velvet, riding a splendid bay. As he passed the dusty travelers his keen and kindly eyes rested on them. Seeing one was an old man, the other only a child, he drew rein and said to them:

"Good morning, friends. Where are you bound?"

"To the town, sir," answered the Scholar with a deep bow.

"And who may you be," the noble questioned, "and why do you come?"

Seeing he meant kindly, the old man answered:

"I was once the teacher of the good King Joyet. I am forced to leave my old home and come here, hoping to find pupils."

"The Great Scholar!" exclaimed the nobleman. "Who has not heard of you? I am glad indeed we have met. I, myself, have a boy sadly in need of a teacher. If you will take him, only say the word."

The Scholar's gentle, tired old face brightened.

"I will most gladly take your son as my pupil," he answered, "and am more than thankful for your courtesy."

"Then you shall go at once to my house, you and your—" he hesitated.

"My adopted son, Marco," said the Scholar.

The nobleman called a man from the troop around him.

"Get one of the spare horses for the Great Scholar," he said, "and take this little one up in front of you. Then conduct them to my house and say they are to be well taken care of until I return." The man doffed his cap and did as he was bid, so as the huntsmen drew away from the city the two travelers rode in at the gate and to a near-by palace, where they were taken in and made most comfortable.

Thus the good Scholar came upon pleasant days, and he and the little Marco fared most happily. For the nobleman was a kind and generous patron. He had one only son, a little boy near Marco's age, but oh, such a shy, frightened little creature. At first he would not go near the old Scholar, but only peeped out timidly from behind his father's broad back. But who could resist Marco's smile and his truthful blue eyes? Soon the two little boys were playing together, and when it came to

lessons the Scholar could have done nothing without his adopted son. For it was Marco who taught the other child to love the flowers and birds, to watch the stars and learn to call them by their names. It was Marco who read to him and helped him with his lessons until the shyness was gone and he, too, was eager to learn as much as his friend knew. And his delighted father, who often came in while the studies were going on, laughingly said to the Scholar:

"Have a care, my friend, lest this sly little chap steal your laurels. It seems to me that my son learns as much from Marco as from yourself."

The old Scholar smiled with pride as he answered: "More, far more, my lord. Without Marco I could have taught him little."

The nobleman looked at the two boys who sat reading from the same book. Then he said:

"Even now I am beginning to be very proud of my son and am grateful to both the old Scholar and the young Scholar for their aid."

After this he always called Marco the young Scholar and other people, hearing him, took up the name until in time he was known by it all over the city.

So the years passed, quietly, happily, until ten of them had brought the boy Marco to a youth of seventeen.

Each year had added to his store of knowledge so that he now deserved the name the nobleman had given him in jest, the young Scholar. But he was far from dull. He was lovable as ever, merry and gay, the stay and comfort of his adopted father, who had grown old and feeble.

One day the nobleman sent for both Scholars to come to him, and as they entered the room they saw by the gravity of his kindly face, that something weighty was on hand. He bade them be seated, then said:

"My friends, my good friends, we shall have to part for a time. My King has just given me a mission of great importance to a far country, and I am to start at once. I shall be gone at least a year, and as my son is all I have in the world, I cannot be separated from him. Besides this, it will be a wonderful journey for him and he will learn many things. Now," he continued, "I wish to arrange for your comfort. If you will remain here in my house you shall be well taken care of. If you wish pupils there are those of my friends who will be only too glad to have you teach their sons. Whatever you wish to do, say the word."

"My lord," answered the old Scholar, "I have been thinking for some time that I would like to go back to my old home. As you know, the King who drove me out has died, and the people have sent away his wild son

and brought back our good King Joyet. I wish to see him again and to end my days where I began them."

"Very well, then," answered the nobleman. "Although it grieves me to lose you, I see I could not have kept you much longer from your old home. I must pass through King Joyet's capital on my return, and my son and I will rejoice to see you and our young Scholar once more."

The next morning the nobleman and his son said good-by, the boy's heart almost broken that he must part from his friend Marco. His father's last words were:

"I have left orders for your comfort. Remember, I owe you more than I can ever pay. We shall meet again," and they rode away.

When the Scholars came to depart, they found two good horses awaiting them.

"They are for you, a gift from my master," said the keeper of the stables. Then the nobleman's steward came forward, holding in each hand a large bag of gold.

"These, also, are for you," he said, "a gift from my master."

"Oh, no!" cried the old Scholar. "It is too much."

"You must take it," answered the steward, firmly. "My master's orders were to give it to you. He said no

gold could ever repay you and your son what he owes to you."

So they were forced to take the gold, and with it they rode away from the city, out of that very gate they had entered, footsore and weary, ten years before.

Although there lay ahead of them a long journey, to him who fares forth over hill and dale with a good horse beneath him and the young spring around him, no journey should be too long. The old Scholar was happy; he was going home. The young Scholar was happy; he was going to a new and strange city, as he believed. So they jogged contentedly along the road which led to King Joyet's dominion.

And, before so very many days had passed, they reached its borders and the old Scholar exclaimed:

"Now I am once more in my own country!"

As they journeyed, he told Marco of his life when he taught in the old town from which he was driven by the wicked King. He talked much of the good King Joyet, and of what a scholar he was.

"Much like you, Marco," he said. "He loved his books. I was proud to be his teacher."

He told how the mob beat at the palace gates and burned a part of the palace itself. Marco listened with interest, then said:

"When I was small, I believed a mob to be a fierce animal, clawing, biting, roaring. I do not know where I got such an idea. Even now that I know better, the very word 'mob' makes me shudder."

But no memory of the little Prince Joyaine came to the mind of the youth who rode by the Great Scholar, listening to his tales of the past.

One fine morning they entered a dense wood, and after they had ridden for some time the old man turned to the boy and asked:

"Do you remember, Marco, that you once lived in the forest?"

"Oh, yes," he answered. "I remember the house quite well."

"It stood in this very wood," the Scholar continued, "and there I used to teach you and little Jodie."

They rode on and presently the log house came in view. Marco stopped his horse and looked long at it. It had been very solidly built, and the storms of ten years had not been able to destroy it. The roof was gone in places, and it had a lonely, deserted air which saddened the boy as he looked. The kind Joda, the good Marta, the loving little playmate, Jodie. Gone, all gone. He brushed his hand over his eyes.

"Marco," said his companion, softly, "I will ride

slowly on. When you wish to, you can follow," and he turned his horse in the direction of the great high road.

The boy still sat in the saddle, while pictures of his life in the wood crowded into his mind. He had thought so little of them all these years he had been away, but now they came before his vision, plainly. Through a window he could see the little room where he and Jodie had slept; the partly open door gave him a glimpse of the great fireplace where he used to sit and read through the long winter evenings; while outside spread the great oak underneath whose branches two happy little boys had frolicked away the bright summer days. It stood there, a very giant in strength, taller, greater in girth, wider spreading than any other tree he had ever seen. But the lives it had sheltered were scattered and gone. A sob broke from the boy's lips and a tear rolled down his cheek.

"Princes should be brave and not cry," called a cheery voice.

Marco gave a great start. Where had he heard that before? He had always known it, but perhaps he had read it. Who had spoken the words, though? No one was in sight. The voice called again, this time more gravely:

"Who are you?"

He looked about—right, left, then up. But there was only a little bird hopping about on a bough above his head, twittering, as little birds do.

"Who is your father?" continued the voice.

Marco stared stupidly. Surely it could not be the little brown bird speaking.

"What is buried under the oak tree?" it said, and this time he was sure it was the tiny bird, but how could he know what was buried beneath the tree? He had waited here too long; he must hurry after the old Scholar. But as he rode away, the voice called after him:

"Come back, come back!"

It was all very curious, and he meant to tell the old Scholar about it; but when he caught up with him the shadows were growing so long they were forced to ride fast to gain the town before sunset, and, indeed, the gates were being closed when they reached them. but the gatekeeper, seeing their haste, waited for them to enter.

"Who are you, friends, that you ride so fast?" he asked.

"I am in haste because I am coming home," said the older man. I was once known here as the Scholar, the teacher of the good King Joyet."

"The gatekeeper stepped forward and peered into the old face above him.

"The Great Scholar!" he exclaimed. "Are you really he?" Then he stepped to the door of the gate-house and called, eagerly:

"Jodie, Jodie, come and see who is here at the gate."

A boy of about seventeen appeared in the doorway. He glanced at the old, then at the young Scholar. For a moment he stood staring; then he sprang forward and gazed up into the face above him.

"Marco!" he cried, "Marco!"

The other slid to the ground, and the two boys clasped hands and stood speechless with happiness. The gatekeeper turned to the old Scholar.

"He is my grandson," he said. "He and his mother, my daughter Marta, live with me. We are in the same old house where you once lodged sir. Your room has always been kept as you left it, when you went so hurriedly away. If you will come to us, sir, it will give us all great happiness."

Then Jodie, still clasping Marco's hand, came to the old Scholar's side.

"My good master," he said, "you remember Jodie, do you not—the little stupid who would not learn,

though you tried hard to get some wisdom into his noddle?"

The old man patted the dark head fondly, as he answered:

"To be sure, it is Jodie, my good little lad. This is a great pleasure for both Marco and me."

"And you will come to our home, will you not?" said the boy. "My mother will be so happy to have you."

"Yes," agreed his grandfather, "it will give Marta great joy. She has often wished to see you and the little Marco."

"We will go with you, gladly," said the old Scholar. "Nothing could seem better than to be in my old home once more."

He rode on, while Marco walked with Jodie, leading his horse. And the good Marta presently welcomed them with tears of joy. So that night the old Scholar slept beneath the roof which had sheltered him long ago, and in the next room the young Scholar lay awake, while three questions echoed and re-echoed through his mind.

"Who are you?"

"Who is your father?"

"What is buried under the oak tree?"

Very early in the morning the old Scholar sent a message to the King, telling of his return to the town,

and asking when he might wait upon his Majesty. The messenger returned in hot haste, saying, "The King sends you greeting, Great Scholar. He says you are to come to-day, and presently a court carriage will be sent for you."

So the old Scholar dressed himself with great care, and was ready when the state coach drew up at the door. As Marco was helping him in, he said:

"I do not wish you to go with me to-day, my dear boy. I wish to tell the King about you, and ask permission to present you to him."

"Very well, sir," answered Marco with a smile, for well he knew the good old man desired to boast a little to the King of his adopted son's great learning.

The King received the Great Scholar with such affection and kindness that the old man was well-nigh overcome. The King asked him of his life since they last had met, and this gave him the opportunity he wanted to tell of his dear boy, Marco.

"Such a son and such a Scholar!" he finished proudly.

"Then the King spoke of the Princess Joyeuse.

"You remember the little Yusa, I am sure," he said. Yes the Scholar well remembered the little baby Princess as he had last seen her.

"She is now seventeen," pursued the King," and

devoted to her studies. It would give me the greatest pleasure to have her taught by my old master. Will you take the Princess for a pupil?"

"Ah, your Majesty," said the old man, "the days of my teaching are past. I could not do the Princess justice. But there is my adopted son, of whom I have spoken to you. He is a born scholar, your Majesty. He won the title of the young Scholar by his wonderful skill in teaching, even when he was a child. I have taught him all I know, and he has gone beyond me in wisdom and judgment. Allow him to direct the studies of the Princess, and she will have the best master in the kingdom."

"But he is too young, I fear," objected the King.

"Seventeen, your Majesty, but on his young shoulders is an old head. At least, give him a trial," begged the Scholar.

"Well, well, to please you, my good master, we will try the young man. Bring him to-morrow, that I may see him."

So, with many thanks, the old Scholar took his leave and hastened home to tell his son of the great honor which awaited him. And when, the next day, Marco was presented, the King was charmed with his manner and his conversation, and told him he might conduct the lessons of the Princess Joyeuse.

She returned his graceful bow with a slight curtsy

In a few days he was summoned again to the palace, to meet his royal pupil and begin his work. He was ushered into a large, sunny room, with windows opening into a garden, there to await the coming of the Princess.

Presently she entered with one of the court ladies, and Marco made her a profound and most graceful bow. This she returned with a slight curtsy and a charming smile, saying: "You are doubtless the young Scholar, come to teach me as your good father taught mine."

Her simple, cordial manner set the young man at ease, and when she motioned him to a chair and began to ask him a little about his life, he found himself talking quite freely to her. Never had he seen a more lovely young girl than the one who now faced him. Her hair shone like strands of gold as the sunlight fell upon it; her face was a delicate oval, fair and sweet; and her eyes were the same deep blue as those of the youth before her.

Had not one been a Princess and the other but the adopted son of a poor Scholar, none could have been blind to the likeness between them. Yet there they sat, brother and sister, talking as strangers, and no man knew the truth.

The lessons were begun, and Marco was both surprised and delighted to find so fine a mind in so young a girl. She learned so readily all he taught her that her teacher became very proud of his pupil, and soon his happiest hours were those he spent at the palace. There grew up, presently, a warm friendship between the Princess and her young master, as they studied and read

together, and Marco felt there was nothing he would not do to serve her.

So passed almost a year, and the spring had come again. One morning the young Scholar arrived at the palace earlier than was his wont, and, upon being ushered into the study, found the Princess there alone. She was standing by a window, and when she turned he saw that she was weeping.

Impulsively he started toward her, saying, "Princess Joyeuse, you are in distress! Can I help you in any way?"

She struggled to be calm and, in a few moments, said:

"I am very unhappy. No one can help me, but I believe it would ease my heart to tell you of my trouble. I feel you are truly my friend."

"I would give my life to save you from pain!" he exclaimed.

"Listen, then," said the Princess. "In a few weeks I shall be eighteen, and then I am to be betrothed."

"To be betrothed!" repeated Marco. "Why, is not that an occasion for joy?"

"Not to me," answered the Princess. "I am to be betrothed to my cousin, Prince Yal, whom I detest." Her eyes flashed.

"But why, Princess, should you marry any one you do not like?" persisted the puzzled teacher.

"Because this kingdom cannot be ruled by a woman, and my father has no son to leave it to, so must have a son-in-law. My cousin, Prince Yal, is much older than I, and although he treats me with courtesy, he cares nothing for me, taking me only to get the crown. But my dear father thinks he would rather leave the crown to him than to a stranger. So, my good master Marco, you can understand why I dread to see these happy days flying by, bringing, all too soon, the birthday and the betrothal. If only my brother Joyaine could be found, I would not have to marry, for my father would then have a son to succeed him."

Marco bowed his head in sympathy, for of course he had heard, soon after he came to town, of the disappearance of the little Prince.

"My father says Joyaine must be dead," continued the Princess, "but my mother, the Queen, is sure he will yet come back to her."

"I wish I could help you, Princess," cried Marco. "If only I could find your brother, the Prince, for you!"

"You can," said a clear voice.

The Princess and Marco started, and looked to see who spoke. The sound seemed to come from the gardens,

but they saw no one there. Only a little brown bird was hopping about on a bough, and twittering, as little birds do. Then they looked at each other, almost in fright, and the Princess half whispered:

"I once heard that voice before, but could see only a little brown bird."

"I, too, have heard it," answered Marco. "Is it not strange? But tell me what it said to you, Princess."

"I stood here, looking out into the gardens one day," she answered, "thinking of Joyaine, my brother, and that he could save me from this hateful marriage. My tears fell fast, and I think I sobbed aloud, 'Oh, my brother, come back to me!' when this same voice said, 'He is coming soon.' "

"I was greatly startled, but could see only that little brown bird we saw just now. I am sure it was the same."

"When was this, Princess?" asked Marco, deeply interested.

"Just before I first met you, for I remember when you came to the palace how I cried myself to sleep that night, because my brother had not come, instead. I told my father and mother about it, but the King only shook his head sadly. My mother, though, believed it, and has

ever since been eagerly expecting my brother's return. But tell me what the little brown bird said to you."

"It was when we were coming to this town," replied Marco. "As we rode through the forest we passed the log house where I once lived, and I stopped to look at it. As I sat there on my horse, under the big oak tree, this same voice called:

" 'Who are you?

" 'Who is your father?

" 'What is buried under the oak tree?' but I could not answer any of the questions. No one was near but the little brown bird, and as I rode away, it seemed to call:

" 'Come back, come back!' "

"Why," cried the Princess, "you could do that, you know! Go back, and find out what is buried under the tree. I must tell my mother that some one else has heard the little bird. She will believe it, more than ever. You have never seen my mother, I know. She does not see many people, but I should like to show you her portrait."

She rose and led the way through several rooms, Marco following, into a long gallery, one side of which had windows looking into the garden, the other hung with paintings of kings and queens.

"These are my people," said the Princess, waving her hand toward the pictures. "Here are my great-grandparents; these next are my grandparents; this is my dear father, as you know; and this—" Here she stopped, and gazed in astonishment at Marco. The young Scholar had fallen back against the window frame, and was staring at the picture, his face white, his whole form trembling.

"Who—who is she?" he gasped.

"My mother, the Queen. Why do you look at it so?"

He put his hand to his breast, as if seeking something which once hung there.

"I know that face," he said. "What is she to me?"

"Who are you?" came a voice through the window.

"Who is your father?

"What is buried under the oak tree?"

The two stood staring at each other, and the Princess's face grew as white as Marco's. But she was the first to recover herself.

"You must go at once," she said. "You must find out. I cannot help feeling it has something to do with my brother, since the little bird has spoken to us both. Please, please, go now."

The young Scholar pulled himself together.

"I will go at once, Princess," he said, in unsteady

tones. "But, oh, say you will let me come back again to see this picture!"

"Why, yes," said Joyeuse, "certainly you shall see it, and perhaps, my mother herself, for when I tell her of all which has taken place she will want to hear what you find."

So he went away, but his mind was on the fair and lovely face of the portrait. As soon as he reached his home he sought the old Scholar.

"Father," he said, "can you tell me who I am?"

The old man laid down his book and a look of distress came into his face.

"No, dear boy," he answered. "When I went to the log house in the wood I supposed you to be the son of Joda, the wood-cutter. It was not until after his death that Marta, his wife, told me you were a little lost child her husband had found in the wood. The last words poor Joda spoke were, 'Tell him—never forget!' and I have since thought he meant something you were to remember."

"Oh, it is all the same thing," cried Marco, desperately. "The little brown bird, and Joda, and then—the face of the portrait. They all seem urging me to remember something," and he covered his face with his hands and sobbed aloud.

"Tell me about the bird and the portrait," commanded the old Scholar, and when Marco could speak, he did so.

"My son, the Princess is right. Go at once, and see what is buried under the tree."

So Marco saddled his horse and rode hurriedly away. When he reached the log house and the great oak he dismounted and tied his horse to a sapling near by. He had been so shaken by the events of the morning that he still was not like himself, but stood staring stupidly at the ground, as though he expected it to open and show him what was hidden there. Then, suddenly, the voice called, as before:

"Who are you?"

The poor young fellow dropped down on a root of the big tree, and bowed his head in his hands.

"I don't know," he said. "I don't know."

"Who is your father?"

"I don't know, oh, I don't know."

"What is buried under the oak tree?"

"I don't know—" he began again, but the voice broke in, rather impatiently:

"Dig, then, and find out."

To be sure, that was what he had come for, but he had forgotten to bring anything to dig with. Then it

came to him, as he looked toward the log house, that Joda once had a pick-ax he used to keep in a shed. Marco went back of the house to search, and there, standing in a corner, the weeds grown up tall around it, was an old, rusty pick. He seized it and hastened back to the tree.

"Here," cried the voice, "dig here," and the little brown bird was hopping about on a low twig, on the side of the tree farthest from the house.

Marco obeyed. He turned up the moss, then the rich soil, working steadily until the pick struck something hard. A few more strokes uncovered an iron box and loosened the earth around it so that the young man could lift it out on the ground. It was not locked, but the lid had rusted and it took several sturdy blows of the pick to open it. The boy's hand shook as he raised the lid, and everything danced before his eyes so he could not clearly see what the box held. He put his hand in, and as it closed upon something which felt like velvet, he drew out a child's coat,—a little faded blue coat.

What stirred in his heart as he looked at it. The forest was very still, yet he seemed to hear a childish voice calling: "Yana, Yana," and to see two little children playing in a garden.

He put his hand in again, and drew out other clothes. When was it a child had sat under a great tree, in the

moonlight, and watched a tall man lay clothes like these in an iron box?

Again he felt in the box, and now he drew out a ring, to which was tied a faded piece of tape. He held it in his hand, thinking, thinking. Who was it—? Why, yes, he knew. It was Joda who had put these things away; Joda, who used to say to him there in the moonlight, "Never forget who you are!"

What did he answer? He was struggling hard to remember.

"I am— He could go no farther. He closed his eyes, holding the ring tightly in his hand, and there arose before him the vision of a large, sunny room, with a table where a man sat writing, writing, writing. A tall soldier stood by the door and a little boy sat on a low stool, waiting until some one should speak to him. Presently the man stopped writing and pressed a ring upon the soft wax he had dropped on the folded papers. Marco opened his eyes wide.

"I saw that!" he cried. "I was there; I was the child! Who was the man?"

Perhaps the box held something more. Yes, for now he drew out a slender gold chain, from which hung a locket. He held it in his hand, almost afraid to open it; yet it might help him to remember. He pressed the spring,

the locket opened, and a lovely, laughing face looked up at him. It was the face he had seen in the portrait!

"Mother," he cried, "mother! Oh, I know now; I know I belong to you!" He lifted it to his lips, then

"A lovely, laughing face looked up at him"

gazed long, through tears, at the beautiful face. A dark cloud seemed to lift from his mind; he remembered all!

The voice in the tree called:

"Who are you?" and he answered, steadily:

"I am Prince Joyaine."

"Who is your father?"

"My father is King Joyet. I am his only son. But my sister Joyeuse is his daughter." Oh, it was true; the Princess herself was his dear little sister!

"Go back, and prove it," said the voice. The young man gathered the clothes together and put them, with the locket and ring in the box. Then he looked up, and although there was only a little brown bird hopping about on a bough, twittering, he said:

"I thank you; I thank you with all my heart. Without your help I should never have found myself."

Then he mounted his horse and, taking the box up before him, rode to the town.

It was very late when he arrived, but early the next morning he sent a message to the Princess, asking that she, the King, and the Queen would receive him, as he had important news of the lost Prince.

When he presented himself later, with his box, he was shown into the study where he found only the King, who greeted him, saying gravely:

"The Princess Joyeuse tells me you think you have found a trace of my lost son, the Prince Joyaine. I hope you are very sure, for the Queen could not bear a disappointment now."

Before the young man could answer the Princess Joyeuse appeared at the door, and on her arm leaned a lovely, frail form, her beautiful face crowned with snowy hair. His heart almost stopped beating as he gazed at the Queen, whom her daughter seated in a large chair. Then, inclining her head to the young Scholar, the Princess said:

"This, mother, is my good teacher. He has come to tell us—" But she stopped suddenly, for the Queen's eyes were fastened on the young man's face. Her own had grown very pale. Drawn by that gaze, the boy took a step toward her. Slowly the Queen rose and stood for a moment, motionless as a statue. Then she stretched out her arms to him, crying, "Joyaine, my son!" and would have fallen to the floor had he not caught her.

The King and Princess stood as though turned to stone, for even Joyeuse had never thought of this. Then the King said to his wife:

"Calm yourself, dear wife. You must be mistaken in believing this young man to be our lost son."

The Queen raised her tearful face from Joyaine's breast and smiling faintly, said:

"Look at them. Look at our two children, and see if I am mistaken."

The King looked first at Joyaine, then at the Princess, then back at the boy.

"They are strangely alike," he said in a troubled voice, "but I must have proofs."

"You shall have them," answered Joyaine, seating the Queen tenderly in her chair. He stepped to the iron box and opened it. Taking out the little blue velvet clothes, he laid them in the Queen's lap.

She took them up, crying, "Oh, see, Joyet! They are my little Yana's clothes—the clothes he wore the last time I saw him," and she put them to her lips. Joyaine then handed her the locket and chain.

"It is the locket I hung about his neck on his birthday," said the Queen. "See, Joyeuse, if my picture is not in it."

The Princess opened it and handed it to the King. Then she took from her own throat one exactly like it and laid it, also, in his hand.

"Yes," he said, "this surely belonged to my son. But," turning to the young man, "how can I know you are he?"

"The day the mob came beating at the palace gates," answered Joyaine, "a little boy sat waiting in a sunny room, while his father wrote at a large table. A soldier stood by the door, and when the papers were signed and sealed, he took them away. Then the little boy's father lifted him on his knee, praised him, and said, 'Princes

should always be good and try to be patient, also.' "

"Yes," said the King, "I remember."

"Then," continued the young man, "the boy asked to see the signet ring which lay on the table. His father put it on his little fat thumb. When the child asked to wear it awhile, the father tied it on with tape like that around his papers."

The King's hand was over his eyes.

"I remember," he said, in a low voice. "Go on."

The young man stepped to the box and drew from it a ring, tied with a piece of faded tape.

"This," he said, and his voice broke, "this was tied on my finger when the good Joda found me, lost in the wood."

He handed it to the King, who, after a searching glance at it, said, "My signet ring!" Then to Joyaine, "My son! I do now believe you truly are my son," and he folded the boy in his arms.

The Princess, who had been watching all this with shining eyes, now broke the silence which followed by exclaiming, "Now after all I shall not have to marry Prince Yal!"

"No," said the King, and he raised his head with pride, "no, for now I have a son to succeed me. Prince Yal must find another bride, and another crown, for—"

"For Prince Joyaine has come into his own!" called a clear voice from the garden.

The King looked hastily out.

"Why," said he, in great surprise, "there is no one there! Only a little brown bird, hopping about on a bough, twittering."

But the brother and sister looked at each other and smiled, for they understood, and their hearts swelled with gratitude for all their happiness, which they owed to the Little Brown Bird.

THE ROSE OF THE DESERT

"Why dost thou delay, Al Khalif?" said Al Sard. "Arise and gather together thy sword hands"

THE ROSE OF THE DESERT

AL KHALIF, the chieftain, sat in his tent, the black tent of the desert. His brow was gloomy, his frown threatening, and he tugged at his beard with an impatient hand. At his left sat his brother's son, Al Sard. Fiery glances shot from the young man's eyes and his words poured forth hotly:

"Why dost thou delay, O my Uncle?" said he. "Again and again have the horsemen of Moghan the Great, Moghan the Cruel, swept the desert, which is thine, and harassed thy people. Arise in thy might, O Al Khalif, gather together thy sword hands—for lo, they are many—and sweep this tyrant into the sea at his door."

Al Sard stopped, breathless from his excited pleading. Still Al Khalif only gnawed the ends of his beard and made answer none. Again Al Sard broke forth:

"Why dost thou hesitate? Waitest thou for some fresh outrage, greater than all those which have gone before? Nay, O my more than Father, be not angry at my rashness, but is not the time ripe for vengeance?"

Then Al Khalif spoke:

"The times are in Allah's hands, to whom be all praise," said he, "yet have I feared lest hasty action work but ruin. But, by the beard of the Prophet," and the old sheik's eyes glittered, "we shall not wait long. The next time Moghan's men touch but a hair upon the head of one of my people, take but one goat from the flock, one camel from the herd, he shall answer for it to me, Al Khalif, chieftain of all the children of the desert from the sea on the south to the mountains on the north. I have spoken! Now let us rest and eat, for thou hast ridden far, and he who brings evil tidings needs doubly to gain strength, for that which hath already come and that which may yet befall him."

He clapped his hands, and servants entered with a low table, placing it in front of the divan upon which sat the sheik and his nephew. Others followed with the meal: first a lamb roasted whole and stuffed with rice

and pistachio nuts; after this the pillau, smoking hot; then, when these had been removed, sweetmeats and coffee. The two men ate gravely, silently, and long, for Al Sard had ridden far since dawn, fasting.

The sun had set and the stars were out in the dark-blue sky of the desert. There was a pleasant murmur of waters, and the faint night wind rustled the leaves of the tall date palms under which the tents were clustered. This little oasis in the wide wilderness of sand held only the village of the chief, although all the tribes near and far acknowledged him as their head. And every man among them burned, as Al Sard, to ride against the cruel king who harassed them night and day.

In his strong city by the sea, Moghan the Great sat in security. His sails swept the blue waters, wresting from passing vessels their precious cargoes; his brutal soldiers oppressed the children of the desert and plundered poor and needy until even his own people, cowering under the terror of his strong hand, called him in their hearts the name his deeds had won for him, Moghan the Cruel. Thus far Al Khalif had dreaded the result of a conflict with so mighty a king, but this night his promise had been given to Al Sard that at the next outrage, he would gather together the tribes and strike a blow for freedom from Moghan's tyranny.

In the old sheik's tent the meal had been cleared away and the musicians were trying to divert their master. A low monotonous strain floated out on the desert air and a weird chant rose and fell fitfully. Neither chieftain seemed to hear it; each was thinking his own thoughts, Al Khalif's head sunk on his breast, but Al Sard's was raised proudly, as though he led a conquering army to battle.

Presently, dismissing the musicians with a kindly nod, the elder man said to an attendant:

"Call my daughter, Lalal," and Al Sard's eyes brightened.

A long silence followed, then the man returned breathless, gasping:

"The Rose of the Desert cannot be found!" The chief leaped to his feet, crying:

"Cannot be found?"

"The people are aroused, they are searching, but she has not been seen since sunset, when she rode away, alone," replied the man.

Al Khalif strode across the tent, his face ghastly to see, and raised a curtain dividing from it another compartment.

"Come, Kanah!" cried he, hoarsely. Then to the attendant:

"Quickly, as thou valuest thy life, saddle him!"

At his first word, out from a group of horses which crowded to the door, stepped a bright bay of pure blood, perfect in form. His delicate ears turned forward, his soft, large eyes fixed themselves intelligently upon his master's face, his small head and arched neck, with its silky mane, tossed proudly as he moved to the chieftain's side. As Al Khalif mounted, Al Sard seized a saddle flung it hastily upon another of the horses and leaped from the tent door after the chief. A moment later, horsemen shot toward every point of the desert in search of the lost Lalal. But the soldiers of Moghan the Cruel have fleet steeds, stolen from the desert, and morning broke upon a fruitless quest.

Al Sard had ridden by the old sheik's side all night, with a heart as sore as his, and when the dawn revealed to them only the empty plain he said:

"Let us return, my Uncle. Thou hast said, 'He who bears ill tidings needs doubly to gain strength.' And the time is now ripe," he panted, between clenched teeth.

Together they rode back to the tents, where every face met them as hopeless as their own. After a hasty and silent meal fresh mounts were brought them, for the tribes were to be roused, but before they could start, a

strange horseman rode to the door of the tent, and springing to the ground, said:

"Hail, Al Khalif! To thee Moghan the Great sends command. Thy daughter is in his hands, and by nightfall will reach his city by the sea, where he will hold her prisoner. No harm shall come to her before sunset on the morrow. Moghan is merciful to thee, sheik," and the man laughed insolently. "Then, as the sun sinks and the last grain of sand runs through the glass, if thou be not at the foot of his throne with the 'Sultan's Ruby' in thine hand as ransom for the maid, her head shall fall. And come alone. Should even one attend," he glanced maliciously at Al Sard, "the sword will fall at first sight of thee, waiting not upon the tardy sun nor glass." He sprang into the saddle and in an instant was beyond call.

The chieftain stood a moment deep in thought, then turned to Al Sard with:

"Then Lalal shall be saved! Bring me the Ruby."

Now the treasures of Al Khalif were these: his horse, Kanah, than which no fleeter steed e'er roamed the desert; the "Sultan's Ruby," and far dearer than all else, the very light of his eyes, Lalal, his only child.

The "Sultan's Ruby" was a priceless gem won by a remote ancestor in battle in far-off lands. Tradition said it once had glittered in a sultan's crown, and it had

As the sun sank lower the sands in the glass seemed to run more rapidly

been the boast of the tribe until Lalal grew to maidenhood. Then to her alone turned the love and pride of every heart, and they tenderly christened her the "Rose of the Desert."

As Al Sard returned, the jewel in his hand, he said:

"Bethink thee, my Uncle, Kanah hath borne thee all the night. Can he reach the city of Moghan by setting of the morrow's sun? Yet, is there another so swift as he upon the earth?"

"None," answered the elder man, "none, and without rest shall he bear me surely and not fail." He turned suddenly to the door of the horses' tent and, lifting the curtain, addressed his favorite thus:

"O Kanah, thou Son of the Morning, dost thou feel the fatigues of the night? Lo, she whom thou lovest, she whose hand hath caressed thee," his voice trembled, "she whose laughter and singing were sweet to thine ears, is taken from us." The horse laid his head upon his master's breast. "She is in the hand of the spoiler, but thou and I, thou and I, I say, will go forth to free her. And the leagues shall be as nothing to thee, they shall melt beneath thy polished hoofs, and we shall return in gladness, bearing with us thy love and mine, the 'Rose of the Desert!'"

The horse neighed loudly in answer and, leaping

forward, looked back impatiently to see his master follow. Helpful hands made ready food and drink, and as Al Khalif mounted and turned his horse toward the west, his nephew said:

"Allah go with thee, O my Uncle. I shall not be idle whilst thou art gone," and a meaning glance passed between them as Al Khalif rode away.

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The city of Moghan the Cruel sat by the sea, her battlements and towers red in the level rays of the afternoon sun. At the southern gate, where the fertile land swept down to meet the water, a dais had been raised on which stood a gilded throne. Above it waved the great fans of peacock feathers, each with a jeweled eye. A canopy of cloth of gold protected it from the sun, and around it was set a guard of soldiers. Through the city gate advanced the procession, Moghan surrounded by his magnificent Court and royal bodyguard. Beyond the line of soldiery crowded the people, waiting to know the fate of the King's captive. Last in the procession, unfettered but strongly guarded, came Lalal, the "Rose of the Desert." The maiden's eye was bright, her step unfaltering. Should the worst befall her, the chieftain's daughter would meet death as a true child of the desert, without fear or trembling.

As the King took his seat upon the throne a shout arose from the soldiers, echoed but feebly by the people. Moghan's brow darkened and his thin lips tightened. His small, keen eyes swept the scene, lingering longest, with evil intent, on his captive. Which would be better, to gain the "Sultan's Ruby," or to see the bright head fall, and gloat over the anguish of the father when he came too late? Moghan scarcely knew, but he sat silent some moments, weighing each possibility. Then he took the hourglass in his hand and thus addressed the people:

"Know ye all, servants of my household, my army and my kingdom, that my royal decree hath gone forth. It wants but an hour until the setting of the sun, and as he dips beneath the western sea, and the last sand runs through the glass, the head of the chieftain's daughter shall fall, unless—" he paused a moment, while his eyes scanned the eastern horizon—"unless Al Khalif himself stands at the foot of my throne with the 'Sultan's Ruby' in his hand. I have said!"

He placed the glass near him and leaned back in his chair to watch the slow dropping of its sands. Once more he glanced toward the east, then his eyes rested upon his captive. The "Rose of the Desert" stood where the guards had placed her, not far from the water's edge. She was a little pale but held herself proudly erect, and

The "Rose of the Desert" stood where the guards had placed her

there was no trace of fear in face or figure. Behind her towered a form terribly familiar to Moghan's people, and as their eyes fell upon him a shudder of loathing ran through the throng. Not a man there but would have rejoiced at the escape of the captive, nor one who did not believe Moghan's cruelty must triumph, while the shadow of the giant executioner, sword in hand, hovered above Lalal's head.

The moments passed in silence. None spoke, though many turned now and again to scan the eastern plain with anxious gaze. The sun sank lower, the sands upon which Moghan's eyes were fastened now seemed to run more rapidly, when a sudden murmur reached his ears. He looked up quickly, saw afar in the east a moving speck, and knew it must be Al Khalif, riding for his daughter's life.

The monarch frowned, then as he looked at sun and glass, smiled more cruelly than before, believing the chieftain must come too late. On came the flying steed, swifter than the desert winds, while the people stood with bated breath watching him, praying silently that he might not fail. Only Lalal never moved save to raise her head more proudly as she gazed at the advancing figure. Suddenly, moved by pity, Shereef, the Grand Vizier, appealed to his master:

"Great King, be merciful! The sands are running swiftly; grant him a little grace."

"Not a moment, not a second!" replied Moghan the Cruel, as he leaned forward eagerly, his eyes fastened on the hourglass.

Shereef drew back, saddened by his failure. His eyes sought the east, then brightened, for the rider had reached the edge of the crowd. The people swiftly made way for him, even pushing roughly aside those of the soldiers who would stay him. He threw himself from his steed, his tall form swaying from weariness, his face ashen gray, but he reached the foot of the throne, held out the "Sultan's Ruby" and gasped:

"The ransom!"

Then the last of the golden sands fell through the glass and the sun sank into the western sea.

For a moment there was a dead silence, then Moghan, without a glance at the once coveted gem, said harshly:

"Take thy child, Al Khalif, but know, hadst thou come one instant later, thou, thy daughter, and the 'Sultan's Ruby' should all have paid the penalty."

Waving the chieftain back, Moghan descended the steps of the throne. Then, attended by his Court, he moved toward the city, and Al Khalif sprang to his

daughter's side. Again he mounted Kanah, the "Rose of the Desert" held by his mighty arm, and sped toward the east. But not until the towers of the city had faded into the darkness behind them did they venture to draw rein. Nor was Kanah forgotten in the caresses which followed, while tears of love and gratitude fell fast upon his glossy coat. Suddenly, galloping feet were heard in the darkness, and Kanah, lifting his head, neighed gladly.

"Fear naught, my daughter," said the old sheik, "these be thy kinsmen." And in a moment they were surrounded by a large band of their own tribesmen, with Al Sard at their head. Escorted by these, Al Khalif and his daughter rode forward until a camp was reached where food and rest awaited them.

. . . . . .

In the gray of dawn Lalal, in charge of a chosen band, was on her way to the tents of the chief, while the vast body of the tribes, led by Al Khalif, rode toward the sea and the city of Moghan the Cruel. Grimly, silently they rode in a silent, sleeping land. No guard was seen, no sentinel's cry rang out on their approach. All was still with a heavy, deathlike stillness. As the east flushed with coming dawn, Al Sard exclaimed softly:

"Behold, my Uncle, under the city wall something moves! Methinks it is the army of Moghan."

Al Khalif sprang to his daughter's side

They rode forward, cautiously. The sky brightened more and more; long fingers of rosy light streamed across the heavens; a golden radiance o'erspread the land and the great orb of day rose into view. Before the men of the desert appeared an army, in size equal to their own, arrayed as they were, and led by an old chieftain with a long white beard. Men turned to each other in puzzled silence. This was not the aspect of Moghan's soldiery, known by them, alas, too well. Still they rode forward. The opposing force remained motionless, the long line of glittering spears reflecting the morning sunbeams in flashes of light. The distance between them lessened, and Al Sard, riding just behind his uncle, muttered under his breath:

"By the beard of the Prophet! Are there two Al Khalifs?"

Then he started, for behind the opposing chieftain rode—himself! And as the tribesmen advanced, each discovered in the opposing ranks, and recognized with cold terror in his heart, his own familiar face and figure. Only the old sheik rode steadily forward with unchanged countenance, until he met his counterpart.

"Who art thou?" he challenged. The other smiled.

"Look well upon me, Al Khalif, and upon my men," he said. "Who sayest thou we are?"

"Mine eyes may deceive me," replied the old chief stoutly, "but I know it is impossible thou shouldst have a band like mine. Unless," he added, "it be by magic."

"Thou hast said," answered his double. "We are djinns of the desert, friends to you and yours. We have been permitted to assume your forms and to do that which your hot hearts desired, saving your hands from stain of blood."

"And Moghan—?" asked the sheik.

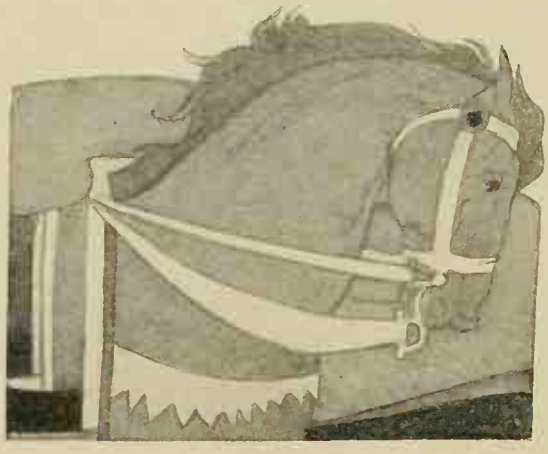
"Is gone, with those like him. Never again shall his cruelty oppress the children of men. Enter now the city—it is yours."

Al Khalif obeyed, riding by the side of the djinn, Al Sard and the tribesmen following. In the city the wondering people stared at the army entering so peacefully the stronghold of their king. On they rode to the steps of the palace. Here, where was wont to be heard the clank of mail, where high captains came and went at the bidding of Moghan, was silence. Only, at the foot of the steps stood a man, bowing low.

"This is he," quoth the djinn, "Shereef the Just, Grand Vizier to Moghan, who dared to plead for thee."

"I thank thee, friend," said Al Khalif, "and pray of thy goodness one favor more, that thou honour me by retaining thy position at my court."

Shereef made reverence, murmured his thanks, then laid in Al Khalif's hand the "Sultan's Ruby."

"Here reign," said the djinn, "in peace and prosperity. Cleanse the land of abuse and secure happiness to thy people." He ceased to speak, and though no man saw him go, he was no more with them. Only a white cloud floated across the sky. Outside the walls, the army of the djinns had vanished, but a few mist wreaths curled up from the ground and drifted out to sea.

So into the place of Moghan the Cruel came the good Al Khalif, long to reign. When he slept with his fathers, there sat upon his throne Al Sard; by his side, dearer than ever, his Queen, Lalal, the "Rose of the Desert."